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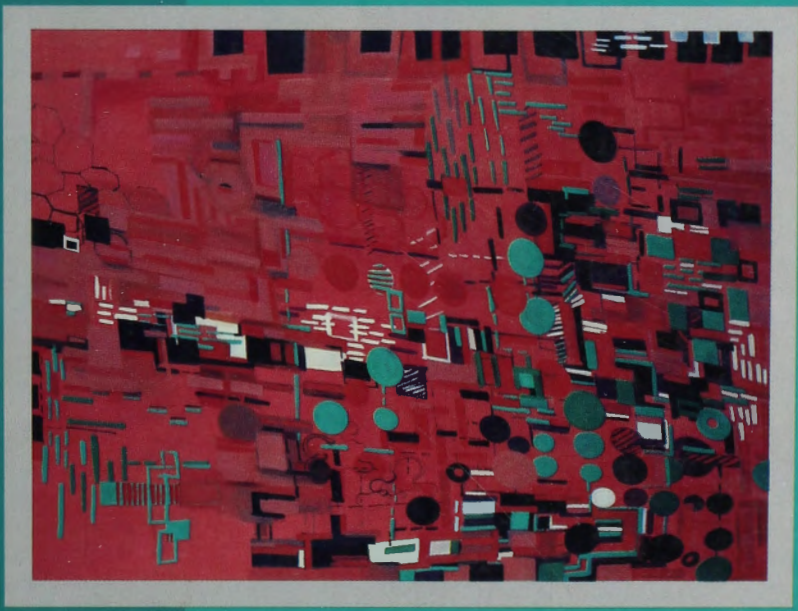

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- A SECTION OF HUNGARIAN POETRY
- ARTWORK BY BRIAN NISSEN, LYDIA DONA AND LAWRE STONE
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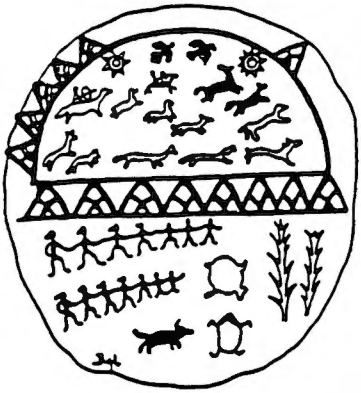

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SULFUR magazine has its main offices c/o English Department, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti MI 48197 (telephone: 313/483-9787). Subscriptions are $15 a year (3 issues) for individuals, $22 for institutions; a single copy is $6. Current issue is Vol. VII, #3. Foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add $3 for book rate mail, $12 for air mail postage. Make checks to SULFUR in U.S. currency. Back issues (except #1) are available. CLAIMS FOR MISSING NUMBERS can be honored only within 3 months after publication. No unsolicited manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by SASE. ISSN #: 0730-305X.

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DESIGN AND TYPOGRAPHY BY BARBARA MARTIN
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WINTER 1988

A LITERARY TRI-QUARTERLY OF THE WHOLE ART

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COVER: LYDIA DONA / *The Topographic Orientation We Are Supposed To Project Into the Fabric of Coral Depends Upon Particles and Codes of Desire / 1987 / Oil & acrylic on canvas / 72 x 100 inches / Courtesy of Luhring Augustine & Hodes Gallery, NYC*
Photo: Erik Landsberg

1988 issues of *Sulfur* are made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

PAUL CHRISTENSEN

The Achievement of George Butterick

The so-called radical politics of the 1960s were second rate compared to the vision expressed by Charles Olson a decade earlier. Olson was, quite simply, the purest instance of the radical imagination at midcentury, and the depth of his creativity throughout the decade belies the seeming blandness, conventionality, and narrow-minded orthodoxy attributed to the 1950s. With Olson at its center, and both Williams and Pound contributing to the forces that created postmodernism, the "drab Fifties" were a time of luminous new perceptions and of innovations whose strengths have not played out some forty years later. Olson broke the century in half and drove a wedge through the devoutly cherished structure of Anglo-American beliefs. He had perceived fully the impact of changes occurring geopolitically in the war era—that Europe and England's empires were dissolving, and that many suppressed, denied, altered cultural traditions would now spring back into the world and reclaim their pre-colonial perspectives. This vision emerged during a promising political career that began in 1941 with the American Civil Liberties Union and ended at the United Nations in 1946, the arch symbol of the post-colonial era. Now was the chance to realign the American vision, to insist upon native roots and customs, the mixed-blood heritage of a former British colony (as he tried to do in a Guggenheim-sponsored project on "the morphology of American culture to be called 'Red, White & Black,'" *(A Guide to* The Maximus Poems, lxii-iii), which he partly conceptualized in *Call Me Ishmael* (1947) and elaborated fully in the *Maximus* cycle). Olson wanted the U.S. to lead the way to a rapprochement with the rest of the world the West had long bullied and exploited. Such realignments called into question the most cherished values and beliefs of the American way, which rested upon the dignifying association with England. The very idea of culture in America drew upon a sense of continuity with English ways, the mother tongue, the assumption that Anglo-Saxon blood

was the superior lineage and Protestantism the true religion. Olson challenged these principles in an effort to shift the grounds of American identity at midcentury.

The character of the second half of the century might well be described as the fleshing of those speculations Olson jotted down into endless notebooks and scrap papers, on envelopes, napkins, placemats, on his walls and door jambs at Fort Square in Gloucester—ideas and prophecies which re-emerged as demonstrations against American imperialism in Viet-Nam and Central America; protests in the name of black freedom and women's liberation, or on behalf of Amerindian culture and social equality; in the exploration of native folkways in the "hippie" era; and in a multitude of Asiatic religions arriving on the West Coast and headed inland. The resulting changes broke up a monolithic Anglo-American sensibility into a diverse, multi-racial consciousness among the curious young and a fringe of innovators in the arts and sciences. Olson had predicted much of the vigor and upheaval of the post-war era, and had formulated many of its causes and strategic expression in his poetry and essays of the 1950s and 1960s. But by 1977, seven years after his death, his work was virtually out of print. What remained of his available texts, aside from Creeley's edition of *Selected Writings* for New Directions, was a few corrupted versions of his poetry in limited issues, and the miscellaneous work and commentary of special features in the literary reviews. The bulk of his work was still inaccessible except to scholars with permission to examine his private papers in various archives around the nation.

When George Butterick began his work on Olson, first as a graduate student at Buffalo studying under Olson, and then in 1970 with publication from Donald Allen's Four Seasons Foundation of *Poetry and Truth,* "Olson was," in Butterick's words, "habitually confused in academic circles with Elder Olson." (*Guide* x) Four years after Olson's death, in 1974, Butterick produced a formidable edition of Olson's more fugitive pieces entitled *Additional Prose,* also from Four Seasons. That same year began another consuming task of producing biannual editions of *Olson: The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives* (1974-1978), in which a whole closet of Olson papers was emptied out and published with flanking notes. Butterick began the systematic breakdown of Olson's reading with the first issue; and though he hoped, as he said in the first number,

to receive lots of comment and original scholarship "in an acceptable scholarly format," his gentle warning to shaggy epigones and street disciples, I doubt he got much that he could use. There was something of Jonah in Butterick, that he could persist all through the ensuing years at his editorial work while academic guardians kept Olson out of the official canon. Those who subscribed to *Olson* were mostly fellow workers, Olson scribes and close followers whose academic careers or professional interests seemed vaguely thwarted by a pervasive disapproval of their chosen subject. The mainstream intellectual audience showed little interest as Olson was slowly being repaired in George's archival workshop. But a steady flow of scholarship came out of Storrs by a lone force tracking Olson's sources, running down the smallest asides, getting up the corrected allusions, and making himself the indispensable amanuensis of a parted master.

Anyone turning to Olson with even a general curiosity would have run across Butterick's name even back in the late 1960s, when he worked out the first practical bibliography of Olson's published work, a little collaborative effort with Albert Glover published by Phoenix Bibliographies in 1967. I began using it to track down the more elusive ephemera, but already I was depending on Butterick, something that would only deepen over the years into a comfortable habit. Butterick's dissertation from SUNY/Buffalo, the first version of the "Guide," was mercifully published by University Microfilms in 1971, and for ten dollars one could begin navigating the murky waters of the *Maximus* with a lifeboat and compass. Anyone schooled in the old tradition of letters at midcentury could only rub one's eyes at the perspective Olson was urging through his poems and unfinished epic. He was dislodging not boulders but the whole bedrock of received notions in the liberal arts. And he was doing it by means of such scatter-shot references—itself the metaphor of his changed base of operations—that any help at all was welcome, and Butterick's was essential. Somehow the job could begin to get done, the job of transferring Olson all the way from where he was, by means of one's roundabout, groping, sidestepping ratiocinations, to the reader, whoever, wherever he/she might be.

Butterick began work on Olson materials very cautiously; he had not been schooled to be a curator or editor, so he learned his trade on the job. I recall his telling me back in 1978 that he had

signed up to take courses in archival science at Clark University in Worcester, Olson's birthplace. He needed the additional training to head the special collection at the University of Connecticut, where he was teaching. He was now guardian of the Olson papers and effects (like the Mayan bone carving Olson had brought back from his dig in 1951) and of other poets' manuscripts, including Tom Raworth and John Wieners. George was quietly operating a kind of revolutionary cell in the heart of Anglo-American culture, and not one of the figures he was preserving had much good to say of Anglo-American culture. George had a collection of writings that urged a profound change of vision from the roots up, a severing of the Anglo side of it, to free up the native imagination to deal with everything unleashed by the war—the spread of Third World cultures, the indigenous past, the New World mind. His office was crouched among the document boxes and crowded stacks of his part of the archive, seated among his increasingly well-organized Olson papers.

The story of how an inland university came to acquire the Olson estate is a curious one of happenstance and seizing at a bargain; if I recall correctly, it was an offer so cheap it couldn't be refused, and of course Olson was known through having taught a few weeks of a seminar there in 1969. Once the boxes arrived, Butterick gradually shifted his attention away from the English department to the library, and by degrees simply moved out of his old post into the archive, where he was finally acknowledged and officially assigned. The move out of the English department signalled another change. The attention he had been paying to Olson's writing and thought as early as the mid-1960s was a current of speculations and pronouncements eroding the boundaries of a meticulous, narrowly focused academic. The seed was already there in George to begin with, in his choice of Olson as a dissertation subject; but the original "Guide" preserves a blameless objectivity as he filled in the background to the *Maximus* poems. He brought a strictly methodical learning to the first guide, operating much as anyone would with the traditional bearings of an American graduate student. If things were not clearly formulated by the poet, George would not go out on a limb to save him from the eager attacks of his detractors. But the years of deepening familiarity with Olson's thought encouraged George into a more active participation with the poet, an approach to the materials that required something approximate to the

intuitive, leaping logic of the poet himself. Olson's materials could not be annotated by orthodox methodology; to grasp the design of the poems and their intentions involved something like a conversion to the perspective from which they had been written. In the first "Guide," Butterick passes over the line in "Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 2," where Olson writes of the Lady of Good Voyage whose "false future she, / precisely she, / has her foot upon." In the 1983 *Guide,* Butterick savors the full intent of its implications:

> Although most generally it is the church itself, orthodox religion, the statue rests upon, there is perhaps an allusion to the traditional pose of Mary in Christian iconography, in which it is Satan in the guise of a serpent that she has her foot upon, crushing its head in fulfilment of the prophecy—a reading encouraged by the mention of "sins" early in the section. (*Guide* 19)

The rules Butterick imposed upon himself in both guides restricted him to the most basic formalities of exposition, so as not to distract the reader with the editor's own eccentricities and quirks. But as the guide to Olson's intellectual landscape, what Butterick chooses to remark upon is itself a stealthy rhetoric of purposes used sparingly but with cunning precision. Olson's assaults upon Christian orthodoxy went to the heart of Anglo-Americanism and tore at its most basic abstraction of an afterlife or heaven outside nature. The younger Butterick passed up the opportunity which the more seasoned reasoner dragged to the foreground.

Butterick was beginning to move toward Olson, to communicate with him far more intimately than can be first gleaned from a reading of his notes and forewords. He was beginning to think like Olson, possibly think *through* him into the labyrinths of his system of myths, dreams, and allusions. Sometime in 1973, Butterick again pored over the text of Olson's "A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn" as he prepared the pages of *Additional Prose,* where this famous passage arises:

> Here's where [part] IV comes in: PRIMARY DOCUMENTS. And to hook on here is a lifetime of assiduity. Best thing to do is *to dig one thing or place or man* until you yourself know more abt

> that than is possible to any other man. It doesn't matter whether it's Barbed Wire or Pemmican or Paterson or Iowa. But *exhaust* it. Saturate it. Beat it. And then U KNOW everything else very fast: one saturation job (it might take 14 years). And you're in, forever. (*Additional Prose* 11)

Butterick had dug *one man,* whom he could now anticipate as he wrestled with the logic of his most abstruse passages. In his "Introduction" to the first volume of *Muthologos,* the word "saturation" comes to him as he explains why Olson did not pre-formulate his thought when giving lectures, the few he actually delivered in public. "He was an unsystematic thinker, although a persistent one, obsessive even, until an area was totally possessed by his repeated acts of attention to it." Butterick begins to even *sound* like Olson. "A 'saturation job,' he called such." (x) But notice this passage near the end of his comments, where Butterick drops the stance of invisible hand and becomes a forceful, lyrical presence in his own voice:

> A reader might find the tapes excellent introductions to the poems, for example. The patterns of thought are similar: paratactic, anacoluthic [abrupt change within a sentence to a new grammatical construction] (as the poet himself was to discover about his syntax), an Emersonian moving by "fits" and "pulses," with one perception leading "immediately and directly" to a further perception, and stories substituted for argument or even stories superimposed on other stories, dovetailing narratives, visionary recitals, cyclical returns. It is a syntax spun so fully from his own being, held so tightly to his chest, that at times there is difficulty following it.
>
> (*Muthologos* x)

Here Butterick describes Olson's prose and thought with something like the admiration Olson paid to Melville. There is both lyricism and concision in what he says of Olson, a balance of brains and affections:

> Nor will the alert reader fail to respond to the rapidity of associations and alacrity of mind, the sometimes aggressive wit

(in the Malanga interview, almost a giddy wit), or feel the poet's deeply reverberating humanity. Wildly referential, occasionally oracular, grandiose, as in the Berkeley reading, with the coloratura of the youthful oratorical champion and schoolboy actor (which he had been), the characteristic energy, rambling, uncertain, large—all that one might have come to expect from Olson. (xi)

George's parting shot in his introduction to *Muthologos* 1 is at the faith one has in modern technology in recreating life. Several times Butterick has observed that the poet of the age of the typewriter gave up composing on the machine soon after he wrote his manifesto "Projective Verse," where he pronounced on its advantages for poetry. Somehow the machine could not quite measure the breath or score the precise rhythms or silences he could fashion with pen in hand. But the force of a large soul, Butterick argues, comes through all the meshes of reproduction and "reveals the circuitous, the intentional withholding, the dramatic suspension of meaning," a nice phrase, but here's an even better one, "or syncopation of meaning, the 'secret of secrecy,' the seizure by image—all characteristics of the writings, all the brilliance and obfuscation which resists paraphrase, as any poet must, in all his uniqueness."

One begins to see the effect of his intense collaboration with Olson in a little pamphlet of Butterick's poems called *Reading Genesis by the Light of a Comet,* published in Willimantic, Connecticut in 1976. The year before saw publication of *Maximus: Volume Three,* which he had co-edited with Charles Boer, alongside *Joel Oppenheimer: A Checklist of his Writings* and his edition of Olson's stories in *The Post Office,* and another *Checklist* of Fielding Dawson's writings a year later, with editions of Vincent Ferrini's *Selected Poems* and another project with Joanne Akeroyd called *Where Are Their Papers? A Union List Locating the Papers of Forty-Two Contemporary American Poets and Writers.* Under this load of scholarly work, the poems naturally enough give off a complaining tone now and then:

Thin thoughts, thin
walls. This head

like a midnight apartment
hears its own conversations.
Flush, spilling milk, weeping,
crackle of gristle and pop-top—
all the language of an argument
of existence: Which noun
goes back in the refrigerator?
Which verb puts out the light for the night?

But his sensibility was now mixed with Olson's, and one discerns the tonal shift of that altered perspective in subtle criticisms levied on familiar cultural targets: an unresponsive society to art, the wasted promises of talent, the struggle to remain attentive in an era glutted with distractions and false leads:

Not to solve the problems of the
universe, but to find out, and attempt,
where the comprehensible begins.

"To have a choice," this poem concludes, "and rise up / into it." The choice, I assume, is between two functions in his life: that of scholar of other poets' work, and the possibility of becoming himself a poet: the chance to rise up to an imaginative freedom. There is a vitality and eagerness in his title poem where he quits the secretarial role of editor and claims his equality alongside the "master,"

The pressure, the competition
to seize the image, the three unsharable dots
with which the line begins. I push the master
against the curve, I compel his hand
to pen, to reemerge like the prayer
beyond blackening, the diver from the sea.
We compete
for the images spilled. Ears run ahead
like hounds, or pace one another. For the reaching,
a mote of speech, a mot, drawn to the eye,
a club brought to the eye
deliberately.
A nostrum
of our own make.

I sacrifice
my sense to drive you toward the poem, master,
the ancient awe of day.

I suspect the poet was always there under the graduate student and assistant professor studying Olson with scrupulous attention. I would even guess that what brought Butterick to Olson to begin with was that hunger for imaginative alternatives, the freedom of mind to explore edges, peripheries, limbos of thought that Olson rushed into unafraid. It was the poet germinating in Butterick that first created an editor and transcriber, careful cataloguer and archivist of the master's canon, over which he presided in something of the fashion of a priestly initiate. They were more than texts and language to Butterick; his dedication to their accurate representation in new editions added up to something beyond scholarly obligation, though how far to take such logic is a question. But Olson's probes into American thought went so deep that they hit a substratum of mental earth that jarred loose some very primal truths—possibilities which bordered on a spiritual rejuvenation, an almost religious excitement in life along the edges of the known. And Butterick had devoured the texts and gone through a metamorphosis, whose private-most counsel was somewhere inscribed in that line of his:

To have a choice, and rise up / into it.

There is the taking of something, possession, that leads to flight, deliverance, change. Elsewhere, an aggressive sense of competition for the images of the poem, for sharing if not squaring off to claim them for his own use. Even so, the poems here are like the early scholar of the dissertation: playing very close to the chest, allowing himself only an occasional trespass of grammatical rules and lyric principles. The desire for freedom is writ in the very tightness of the language, the frustrated sense of being cramped into a small space of rules, routines, obligations. The light of a comet is thin indeed, unless one is already rising up to it with the text of one's genesis under the arm.

I take it that what I am here tracing is an evolution of psyche, a peculiar and private one occurring within the brains of a scholar/

editor whose subject possessed the volatile ingredients that changed him. When I compare such a narrative of events to the academic colleagues I now know, I see the parable in George's life. Hardly anyone in academic life is changed by the subject; usually the change is by the job, the career, the rigors of the occupation itself. It used to be that one could detect the resonances of a period style in the prose of the scholar who had long mastered it, as with Frederick Pottle and his histories of the 18th century. But today, one usually creates a specially detached persona to write about an author, poet or fiction writer, keeping up the glazed distance of having a special theory or structural analysis to perform. In Butterick's case, one begins to see what it means to become the "ideal reader" of someone else's texts—it literally calls for the transmigration of the reader's soul into the texts he studies. The reader is the flesh of the words he reads, and Butterick's guides and baffling array of editions and revised editions add up to a solitary vigil at Olson's forehead.

Consider the diligent energies required to make a full editorial account of the Olson/Creeley correspondence, which Black Sparrow began producing in 1980, and which now runs to eight volumes and counting. There are, according to Butterick's introduction in volume one some thousand or so letters in what Creeley once described as his "practical 'college' of stimulus and information," many of them running to considerable length. Butterick gives his characteristic cautionary statement on editorial procedures and in typically clipped speech adds his sense of their significance and of the necessity to maintain faithful accuracy in the reproduction of all their subtleties and ambiguities of pun or punctuation. In this editorial project, Butterick was moving out into the territories of influence and association, canvassing the widening ring of Olson's energies. But in what now seems an inevitable step in Butterick's literary evolution, Butterick joined Donald Allen in the delicate task of revising the foremost anthology of midcentury, the groundbreaking *New American Poetry* of 1960, retitled simply *The Postmoderns,* and issued in 1982.

If Butterick's deeper self is not yet in his poems, it resides in all his prefaces to editions of Olson. Not in any *one* place or lyric effusion, but everywhere—aspects of the sober, scrupulous tester of others' facts, the poet's intentions, the tireless alter ego of Olson

going back as Olson had sometimes done to check watermarks in order to date manuscripts. (Butterick had once made a chart of watermarks found among Olson's manuscripts in order to establish a frame of reference for ordering *The Collected Poems* and *Maximus*.)

> Identifying the poems [of *Maximus* III] to be included meant going methodically through the more than 150 document boxes which now house the assorted papers and records of Olson's life; the roughly 60 notebooks and notepads of the period from 1963 to his death (some 20 of the poems turned up there); the letters from over 500 correspondents, on the backs of envelopes of which poems were occasionally composed; and through the 1,500 books in Olson's library. . . It took a year beyond the preliminary sorting done in the summer of 1970 on behalf of the Olson estate to prepare the materials for disposition according to Olson's last instructions, and it was clearly the only way to proceed. Olson's habits required it.

In his long, exploratory essay on his methods of editing Olson among others, "Editing Postmodern Texts," published in *Sulfur* 11 (1984), Butterick not only gives a lesson in good editing procedures, but subtly insinuates another set of principles along the way, not least of which is the creative responsiveness any editor must bring to raw, unfinished, alternatively revised texts—he/she must be bold to make intelligent decisions, and thus by a sometimes suprarational intuitiveness infer how the poem was intended to be complete. This is a delicate matter and he must insist upon the point if one is ever to publish a text without endless lacunae and ellipses. Butterick is his own best example of the double-checking, thorough analyzer of his own decisions; they are never made without intricate cautionary stages, and he several places avows that he will not tamper with an illegible word or phrase, but leave it blank. And yet, there are those cases where the hesitations of the author are not inscrutable and had best be resolved by the analytic, cross-checking empiricism Butterick proposes. On another front, Butterick firmly dismisses the compulsive orthodoxy of many academic editors of texts, citing as one dreary example the butchered editions of Emily Dickinson, whose exquisite individuality was overlooked to make

her conform to canonical precepts. "Above all," warns Butterick, "the scholar-editor must eschew any of the imperialisms of scholarship, even more than the occasional pedantries of the publisher's 'house style.'" (126) By so deft an innuendo as "imperialisms" Butterick goes to the heart of postmodernism in the academy—its dilution by old habits of thought, the continuous adulteration of its portents in company of conventional authors in the myriad academic anthologies and mundane critical surveys. As Butterick carefully argues, the right editor of such texts must heed the ideological assumptions of the texts if he or she is to bring them faithfully to print. "A poetry without a sustaining predictability of rhyme and meter may depend more on greater subtlety," wrote Butterick, laying his gauntlet down with characteristic firmness.

The result of his own care and devotion has led to the publication of almost the whole body of Olson's work in definitive, authoritative editions. Most recent has been the vast compendium of *The Collected Poems* (1987), the bulk of which prints for the first time an astonishing range of poetry. Like Frank O'Hara, Butterick notes in his introduction, Olson squirreled away most of his poems without bothering to get them published. The other great edition is, of course, *The Maximus Poems,* in corrected, revised typography and with a much altered order of poems, the procedures for which are explained in the afterword and in *Editing the Maximus Poems* (1983). His *Guide*, also revised, is the third of these monuments, in which, by a subtle discretion, Butterick proves the coherence and power of the poem through a steady pace of synthesizing entries, each showing the progress of fully orchestrated and balanced structures. The frame of reference of the annotations is a library of alternative visions and utopias, the religious lore of Asia, Amerindian culture, pre-Columbian civilizations, a vast array of earth histories, mythography, paths that race out of the circle of imperial absolutes and racial convictions which Olson had spent his life destroying and replacing. Butterick's own mastery of them is its own performance, its own flawless execution of the score, as if he were playing the poems, flourishing his fingers over their notes, surprising us with the effortless symmetry of this ignored masterpiece.

But as these projects completed themselves, the other Butterick also emerged in new books of poetry beginning with *Rune Power* (1983), and the "Mummy" sequence in *Repartee with the Mummy*

(1987) and the forthcoming *Mummy Strands and Others* (Am Here Books). His poems have begun to appear in *Temblor, Sulfur, New American Writing*. The newer poetry is vigorous, sharp-tongued, musical, and occasionally bitter:

> When the severed head struck the ground,
> it is said to have bitten the earth.
>
> my own head
> a bitter mineral in the water

And he is capable of his own leaps now:

> : all system is of late creation.
> They [the gods] are simple in themselves, a circle of hearts in throb.
> They are the chatter in a fire. They swing their heels over beasts to get bitten by beauty

Or this:

> I make love a country, green spikes,
> a marsh-hen tears up the rushes
> in flight, scorn discouragement
> how beautiful to discover the other
> slope in
> our brakeless carriages

One may gauge a little of the progress the other Butterick has made in recalling his earlier phrase, "To have a choice, and rise up / into it," to now being "in flight, scorn[ing] discouragement."

ELIOT WEINBERGER

Lost Wax / Found Objects: Brian Nissen's Bronze Relics

I

"Good sculpture," wrote Ezra Pound, thinking about Gaudier-Brzeska, "does not occur in a decadence. Literature may come out of a decadence, painting may come out of a decadence, but in a decadence men do not cut stone." Within that hyperbole—written, strangely, in spite of the evidence at hand: a master stonecutter killed in a pointless war—is a small seed of truth.

Decadence implies a self-absorbed present: one that may yearn for certain lost moments of history, but in which history has attenuated, and the ancient knowledge, beliefs, customs, mores have lost their vitality. Religion becomes superstition, custom entwines with commerce, taboo turns to common practice. That literature and painting are produced in ages of decadence may owe, in part, simply to their materials, which have so little history. To write (in the West) is to use the language, however stylized, of one's contemporaries—a language not much older than one's grandparents. One paints with materials that are only a few centuries or a few decades old: oil, watercolor, acrylic. But to sculpt—literally to "sculpt": carving or shaping stone, wood, clay, wax—is to work with one's hands on ancient matter: to remain in the present while simultaneously inserting oneself into a continuum that begins in the archaic.

To work in bronze, as Brian Nissen does, is to immerse oneself in a process that has remained unchanged since its invention in Egypt in 2600 B.C. It is to create pieces that—no matter how new or idiosyncratic in form—share their molecules and the act of their making with Anatolian winged centaurs and bull's heads from Ur, Cretan double axes and Corinthian helmets, Saxon heads with silver eyes, Persian ewers incised with lovers and cuirasses with inscriptions from the Qu'ran, Etruscan sunburst oil lamps, hunting reliefs from Vace, Shang bells and drums and tall-stemmed bowls, the long-tailed birds of the Chou, their vessels covered with meanders

and continuous volutes, their monster masks with ring handles, their animal-headed daggers and knives, cheekpieces, jingles, harness fittings, the mirrors inscribed "May we never forget each other" with which the Han nobility were buried, shields from Battersea and Celtic buckets, battle-axes from Luristan, Greek charioteers, kings of Nineveh, the gates of the Assyrian palace of Balawat, Marcus Aurelius on his horse, the doors of St. Sophia in Byzantium and St. Zeno in Verona, the seven-branched Easter candlesticks of Rheims, Gothic fonts and covers, Romanesque chandeliers and pelican lecterns, Parthian perfume stills, Moorish aquamanales in the shape of lions, the huge eyes and blank stares of Benin masks and heads, lanterns of musical Bodhisattvas from Nara, Bamun pipes of lizards and ancestors stacked like totem poles, the saints and miracles on the doors of Pisa, Renaissance lamps in the shape of a foot, in the shape of a man with his head between his legs (or worse), Donatello's plaquettes, Degas' dancers, Rodin's ponderer, filigreed flowerbaskets from Kamakura and the four-thousand-pound statue of Queen Napirassu of the Elam, three thousand years old and headless now, but with her hands delicately crossed. . .Objects created out of a marriage—traditionally celebrated as such—of copper and tin, whose officiant, the smith, was revered and reviled, subject to the same taboos as priests. Objects created in a process that has always been seen as a metaphor of the sacred mysteries: the wax is shaped and encased in sand, clay, or plaster, then baked in a kiln until the wax runs out, leaving the mold into which the bronze is poured. "Lost wax": only when there is nothing, when one has *created* a nothing, can the work be achieved.

"Sculpture," said Brancusi, "is not for young men."

II

To which, looking at Nissen's work, must be added another layer of history: the New World—which made knickknacks of bronze, but never had a Bronze Age—before the arrival of the Old.

Nissen, born in England in 1939, went to Mexico at age twenty-three and stayed for seventeen years, with frequent visits since. [And there too, a long line of British ancestors: Thomas Blake in Tenochtitlan only thirteen years after Cortés; Robert Tomson in 1556

accurately prophesying that one day it would be "the most populous Citie in the world"; that meticulous 18th century observer, Thomas Gage; Frederick Catherwood, discoverer and the great draughtsman of the Maya ruins; the chronicler of 19th century drawing rooms, Frances Calderón de la Barca, a Scot married into Mexican society; the archaeologist Alfred Maudslay; Henry Moore, appropriating the reclining figure of the Maya-Toltec *chac mool;* the surrealist Leonora Carrington; Lawrence, Huxley, Waugh, Greene, Lowry; and the anonymous legions of scholars and bohemians, repressed voluptuaries, missionaries, drunks, xenophobes and aristocrats gone native—those who went to escape and those who went to find.]

Nissen, coming out of post-imperial England, found in Mexico, as so many Europeans before him, vivacity—a vivacity that extends even into its obsession with death—and a unity, still extant in the hinterlands, of art and life. (Antonin Artaud: "In Mexico, since we are talking about Mexico, there is no art: things are made for use. And the world is in perpetual exaltation.") Above all, he found its indigenous history. Three of the forms of pre-Columbian expression are essential to Nissen's work: the glyph, the codex, and the temple. Their elaborations are tracks towards Nissen's work:

The Maya glyphs are important here not for their individual meanings (decipherment) but for their system of construction. They were laid out on a grid that could be followed in a variety of directions. Within each rectangle of the grid, the individual glyph itself was a conglomerate of component parts (much like the Chinese ideogram): simple pictographs (a house for "house," a vulture for "vulture"), phonetic signs (each representing a single syllable), logographs (non-representational representations of a word), and semantic determinatives (specifiers of particular meaning).

For the Western mind—if not to its native practitioner—the glyph or the ideogram has concreteness, a weight, that does not exist in alphabetic writing: the word is an object. Further, it seems—particularly to those who cannot "read" them—that each glyph, each word, has the *same* weight, that the glyphs are equal to one another, giving each thing in the world an identity correspondence. Charles Olson, in a letter from the Yucatan, writes:

What continues to hold me, is, the tremendous levy on all objects as they present themselves to human sense, in this glyph-world. And the proportion, the distribution of weight given same parts of all, seems, exceptionally, distributed & accurate, that is, that

sun

moon

venus

other constellations & zodiac

snakes

ticks

vultures

jaguar

owl

frog

feathers

peyote

water-lily

not to speak of
fish

caracol

tortoise

& above all
human eyes

hands

limbs

PLUS EXCEEDINGLY CARE-
FUL OBSERVATION OF ALL
POSSIBLE INTERVALS OF
SAME. . .

And the weights of same, each to the other, is, immaculate
(as well as, full)

Elsewhere, complaining of the archaeologists Morley and Thompson's romantic image of the Maya as purely intellectual skywatchers, Olson makes the interesting observation that, for the Maya, time was *"mass and weight"*—that is, time itself was an entity as concrete and tangible as any other.

The extraordinary scholarship, and partial decipherment, that has occurred since Olson wrote in the early 1950s has proven that the glyphs are even more complex. The Mayaologist Linda Schele notes—to take one example—that the word "vulture" could be written in pictographic form, geometric form, or syllabic form. A pictographic vulture with a crown was one of the many ways of writing *ahau,* which meant both "lord" and one of the day-names of the Maya calendar. The pictographic vulture could also refer specifically to the black-headed vulture called *tahol* (literally, "shithead"). From that, the vulture glyphs (whether pictographic or geometric) were also used to represent *ta'* ("shit") or *ta* (a preposition meaning "to, on, from"). There were, then, nearly endless ways to write any given word, and Mayan scribes were valued for their punning and ability to coin new variations while strictly adhering to the rules.

This meant not only that each word was an *assembled object,* but that each object was in a state of perpetual metamorphosis, its meaning only comprehensible for the moment it is seen in the context of the other object-glyphs. That metamorphosis, within the

larger repetitions of circular time, remains, in Mexico, a constant. In the poetry of the Aztecs, the poet becomes the poem itself, which becomes a plant growing within the poem; the plant becomes the fibers of the book in which the poem is painted; the fibers of the book become the woven fiber of the mat, the symbol of worldly power and authority. Octavio Paz's "Hymn among the ruins" ends with this famous line: "words that are flowers that are fruits that are acts."

Nissen, then, constructs his sculptures as glyphs. His work table is covered with small components fashioned out of wax: tiny balls, cylinders, zigzags, donuts, squares, cubes, lozenges, triangles, rods, j-shapes, pellets. In an interview, Nissen has commented: "I use a method based on the found object. The difference being that first, I make the objects, then I find them. Then I assemble them." He has remarked elsewhere that he also considers those components as parts of speech—given elements capable of a near-infinity of combinations. His "Coffer," a box overflowing with morphemes, can be seen as that great toy chest from which the artist invents his games. Their assembly is reminiscent, above all, of language as it is used by children, poets, punsters. The result—the individual piece of sculpture—is a phrase, a stanza (literally the "room" in which the words are arranged), a single moment of relation permanently frozen in bronze.

Nissen has also worked extensively, and with great originality, in the creation of codices. There were two styles of Mexican codices. The Maya—of which only four survive—largely consisted of a hieroglyphic text accompanied by some illustration. The later Mixtec screen-fold codices are more extraordinary: Each page presented complex images—not all of them pictographic—that served as mnemonic devices for the priestly elite trained to "read" them, but were incomprehensible to outsiders. It is a kind of "text" unknown outside the New World, but which has its parallels in the geometric patterns of Amazonian baskets and Peruvian woven cloth, both of which could be "read." [Dennis Tedlock points out that the Maya world for the codex was *tlbal,* or "instrument for seeing." Today the word is used to refer to telescopes.]

Nissen has continued, in traditional screen-fold book form, the pictographic experiments on canvas of Klee, Tobey, Gottlieb and Torres-Garcia. His "Madero Codex" invents a witty language of jigsaw puzzle pieces, wooden matchsticks, cigarette butts, human

figures (perhaps the Maya "smoking gods"?), crossword puzzles, gridworks of letters that seem to, but don't quite, spell words like "glyph" and transform into a Mondrian "boogie-woogie." In its translation of traditional into contemporary imagery, it is reminiscent of the strangest illustrations in Mexican historiography: those that accompanied F. J. Clavijero's *Historia Antigua de Mexico,* published in 1780. In that book the artist, rather than presenting the usual heavily stylized renderings of the Mexican originals, simply "interpreted" the glyphs and codices and redrew them in the current fashion. Thus, if he thought he saw a hand holding a fish in the original, he drew a hand holding a fish in the style of an 18th century lithograph. The elaborations are wonderful: a running figure with a daisy head, a man with a lily growing from his nose, a snake crowned with arrows. Clavijero's book, whose intentions were scientific, becomes, for us, surrealism. Nissen, with no pretense of historical realism, creates both a science and a grammar.

Nissen's more complex "Itzpapálotl Codex" takes off from the Aztec goddess Obsidian Butterfly and a prose poem on the subject by Octavio Paz. It consists of grids of invented glyphs (some of whose components are recognizable small metal objects: keys, wrenches, nuts and bolts, horseshoe magnets, tuning forks, springs); electronic circuits; graffiti (*mosca,* fly; *tinieblas,* darkness; *Ramón, Pepe, Berta. . .*); butterflies; clippings and maps concerned with the village of Papálotl, home of the goddess' shrine; encyclopedia entries on the goddess; Maya numbers; and so on. These represent, according to their author, a calendar, an entomological taxonomy, a topography, a mathematical reckoning (an accounting, in all the meanings of the word), auguries, and an inventory of tributes the goddess has received. The result is extraordinary: beautiful images that leave us just short of comprehension. Much like the ancient codices, in order to understand it the initiated (of which there is only one: Nissen) must recall it; the uninitiated (the rest of us) must invent it. The game has no end.

III

What Nissen makes are altars, idols, temples, ruins, machines, ships, fountains. . .each, the moment it is recognized, turning into another.

The two basic shapes on which he rings his countless variations are the truncated pyramid and the pillar. The truncated pyramid comes, of course, from the Maya, and Nissen plays, as they did, with the harmonies and contrasts of the simple base and what was placed on the flat top (altars, idols, columns, friezes, false-fronts). It has often been remarked that the Maya pyramids are less works of architecture than sculpture built on a monumental scale. One can imagine them a foot high—the height of many Nissen sculptures—as one could imagine certain of Nissen's pieces as hundreds of feet high, as architecture. And more: the slender pyramids of Tikal (for example), topped with their high combs, mimic a Maya head with its flattened forehead and elaborate headdress. So Nissen's "Pod," a stack of pea pods placed on a blank base, is simultaneously a fantastic Maya pyramid, an altar on which the pods have been placed, and the blank face and extravagant headdress of an imaginary Pea Goddess—a goddess of fertility and harvest whose last incarnation may well be Carmen Miranda.

The vegetation, the plant forms, that rise out of so many of Nissen's sculptures—as well as the crumbled walls, the gaps (like aboriginal "x-ray" painting) revealing the tombs of images within—cannot help but recall the particularly English preoccupation with ruins. It is an obsession whose earliest record is the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Ruin," a rumination on the rubble of the Roman city of Aquae Sulis (now Bath). An obsession that reached its heights with the Romantics, after the translation in 1795 of Volney's *The Ruins, or a Meditation on the Cycles of Empires*—one of the four books given to educate Frankenstein's monster, and a book that leads directly to Shelley's "Ozymandias" or Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." One thinks of the architect Sir John Soane, contemporary to these poets, submitting three sketches of his design for the Bank of England: in the first, the Bank appears brand-new and gleaming; in the second, it is ivy-covered, with weathered stones; in the third, the time is a thousand years later, and the Bank is a stately ruin.

The Romantics saw ruins as emblems of the transitoriness of power, the permanence of nature, the destructive force of greed and corruption, the chaos of the heart overwhelming the orderliness of the intellect. It is possible to ascribe such allegorical meanings to Nissen's sculptures, but they are unlikely. In the first place, the work begins as a transformation of what he literally saw in Mexico:

buildings half in rubble, overwhelmed by roots and branches. What matters is not the allegorical (that is, literary) interpretation but rather the fact of metamorphosis itself: the temple becomes a plant that becomes a bronze.

That play of stone, vegetable and metal brings another element into these sculptures: machines. There are works here called "Metronome," "Hydrant," even "Jacuzzi." Some of the pieces are simultaneously reminiscent of both the severely truncated versions of the pyramids (the raised platforms in the Great Plaza of Copan, for example) and, an identical shape, the office typewriters of the 1920s.

One thinks of the great debates in the Machine Age of the 1920s and 1930s between the advocates of the machine as the ultimate icon of the new age—a progressive art to celebrate human progress—and those who argued for the perennial centrality of the organic (then called the "biomorphic"). Hart Crane, carrying the argument to literature, attempted to reconcile the two: "For unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e. *acclimatize* it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles and all other human associations of the past, then poetry has failed of its full contemporary function." It is interesting to see how, fifty years later, that acclimatization is complete in work like Nissen's—it is not even a question. His "Typewriter" is composed of submarine vegetation; his "Fern" grows razors; his "Zempoala" is a pyramid (in the Totonac site of that name) excavated by Nissen and also a tool box; his "Jacuzzi" is adorned with the rings that are washers that are the hoops protruding from the blank walls of the Maya ball courts that are the life preservers on a ship.

Nissen's verticals are constructivist towers, fountains of leaves, sprouting smokestacks, totemic poles, a metronome that is a reliquary, impossible skyscrapers. Some are meant to be walked around; some, despite their (our) size, are meant to be walked into. Others have only one face, and are meant to be looked at face-to-face: objects for invocation, things to talk to as the faithful talk to the saints and virgins in the cathedrals.

Anyone familiar with Mexican art will hear the numerous echoes and rhymes in Nissen's sculpture: the anthropomorphic columns of Tula, the diamond patterning of the Nunnery in Uxmal and the saw-toothed combs of its House of Pigeons, the hooked

nose of the rain god Chac protruding from the temples of Chichén Itza and Kabah. They are not—as in the case of the great Mexican muralists—meant to be folkloric, or glorifications of a national past. (It is, of course, neither Nissen's nation nor his past.) Nor are they meant—as the Surrealists used African and Oceanic imagery—as icons of another reality to transport us to dream and the archaic. They are never literal.

What Nissen makes are fetishes: objects of power, objects that look at us looking at them. The source of a fetish's power is accumulation: traditionally each supplicant added something to it, and its strength was the sum of all the individual histories attached to it. Nissen, although he remains the sole "author," reproduces that accumulation in each work. Working with a vocabulary of elemental signs, he heaps layers of history that crumble one into another and become tangled with weeds.

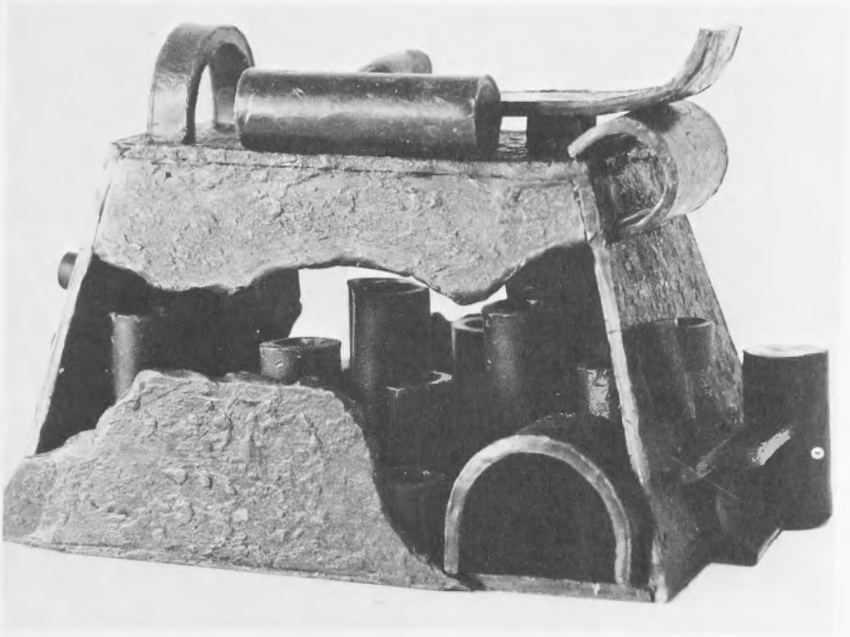
They are idols whose attributes are not quite remembered; maquettes for the monuments of a future civilization; machines with obscure functions; altars for a household shrine. They are objects to be buried with.

BRIAN NISSEN

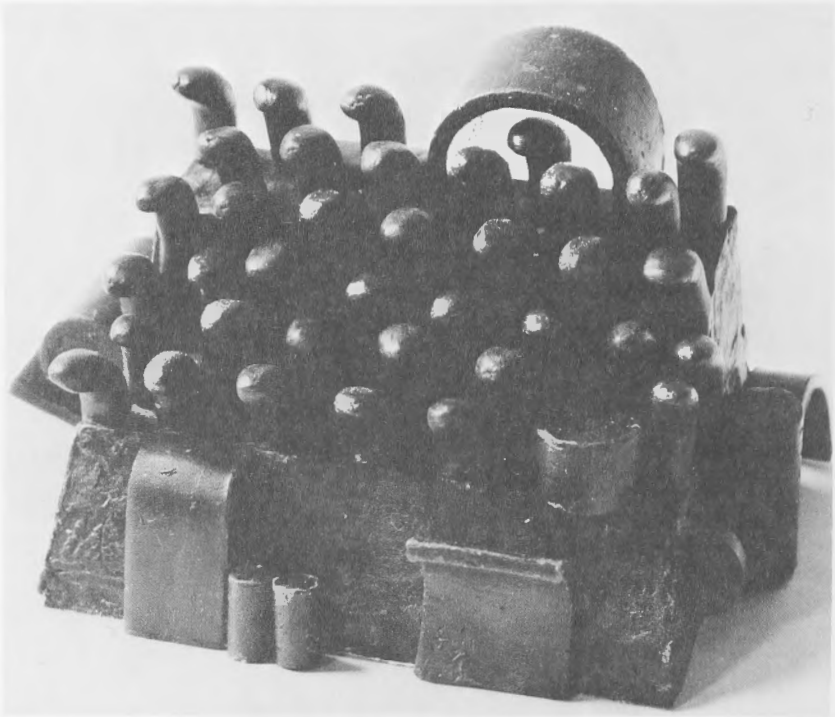
Six Sculptures

POD

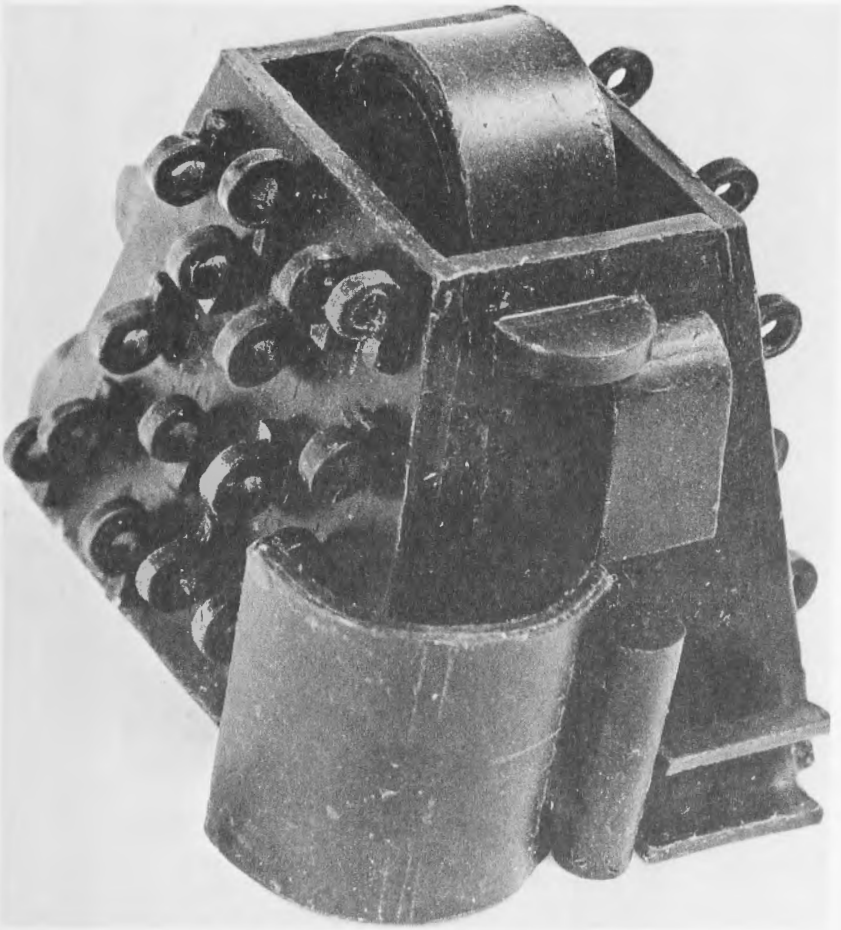
FERN



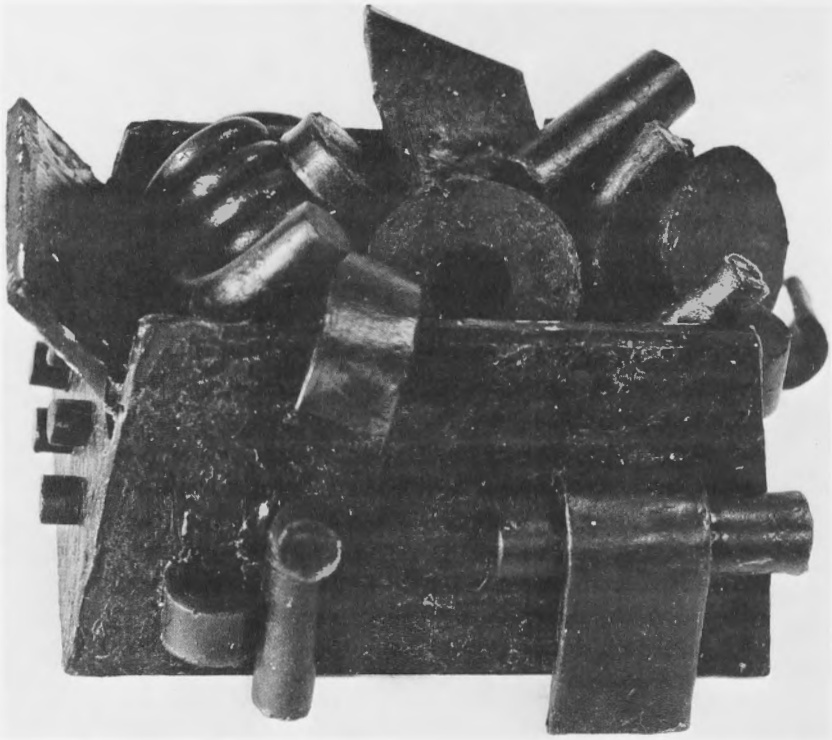
ZEMPOALA



TYPEWRITER



JACUZZI



COFFER

JEROME ROTHENBERG

Poland/1987

"Khurban"

Since the hidden is bottomless, totality
is more invisible than visible. (C.E.)

IN THE DARK WORD, KHURBAN
all their lights went out

their words were silences,
memories
drifting along the horse roads
onto malkiner street

a disaster in the mother's tongue
her words emptied
by speaking

returning to a single word
the child word
spoken, redeyed on
the frozen pond

was how they spoke it,
how I would take it from your voice
& cradle it

that ancient & dark word

those who spoke it in the old days
now held their tongues

1
DOS OYSLEYDIKN (THE EMPTYING)

at honey street in ostrowa
where did the honey people go?
empty empty
miodowa empty
empty bakery & empty road to warsaw
yellow wooden houses & houses plastered up with stucco
the shadow of an empty name still on their doors
shadai & shadow shattering the mother tongue
the mother's tongue but empty
the way the streets are empty where we walk
pushing past crowds of children
old women airing themselves outside the city hall
old farmers riding empty carts down empty roads
who don't dispel but make an emptiness
a taste of empty honey
empty rolls you push your fingers through
empty sorrel soup dribbling from their empty mouths
defining some other poland
lost to us the way the moon
is lost to us
the empty clock tower measuring her light four ways
sorrel in gardens mother of god at roadsides
in the reflection of the empty trains
only the cattle bellow in
like jews the dew-eyed wanderers
still present still the flies
cover their eyeballs
the trains drive eastward, falling
down a hole (a holocaust) of empty houses
of empty ladders leaning against haystacks no one climbs
empty ostrowa & empty ostrolenka
old houses empty in the woods near wyzkow
dachas the peasants would rent to you
& sleep in stables
the bialo forest spreading to every side
retreating the closer we come to it to claim it

empty oaks & empty fir trees
a man in an empty ditch who reads a book
the way the jews once read
in the cold polish light the fathers sat there too
the mothers posed at the woods' edge
the road led brightly to treblinka
& other towns beaches at brok
along the bug
marshes with cat tails
cows tied to trees
past which their ghosts walk
their ghosts refuse to walk
tomorrow in empty fields of poland
still cold against their feet
an empty pump black water drips from
will form a hill of ice
the porters will dissolve with burning sticks
they will find a babe's face at the bottom
invisible & frozen imprinted in the rock

2
DOS GESHRAY (THE SCREAM)

"practice your scream" I said
(why did I say it?)
because it was his scream & wasn't my own
it hovered between us bright
to our senses always bright it held
the center place
then somebody else came up & stared
deep in his eyes there found a memory
of horses galloping faster the wheels dyed red
behind them the poles had reserved
a feast day but the jew
locked in his closet screamed
into his vest a scream
that had no sound therefore
spiraled around the world

so wild that it shattered stones
it made the shoes piled in the doorway
scatter their nails things testify
—the law declares it—
shoes & those dearer objects
like hair & teeth do
by their presence
I cannot say that they share the pain
or show it not even the photos
in which the expressions of the dead shine forth
the crutches by their mass the prosthetic limbs by theirs
bear witness the eyeglasses bear witness
the suitcases the children's shoes the german tourists
in the stage set oswieczim had become
the letters over its gates still glowing
still writ large
ARBEIT MACHT FREI
& to the side HOTEL
and GASTRONOMIC BAR
the spirit of the place dissolving
indifferent to his presence
there with the other ghosts
the uncle grieving
his eyelids turning brown an eye
protruding from his rump
this man whose body
is a crab's
his gut turned outward
the pink flesh of his children
hanging from him
that his knees slide up against
there is no holocaust
for these but khurban only
the word still spoken by the dead
who say my khurban
& my children's khurban
it is the only word that the poem allows
because it is their own
the word as prelude to the scream

it enters
through the asshole
circles along the gut
into the throat
& breaks out
in a cry a scream
no one can hear but me
it is his scream that shakes me
weeping in oswieczim
& that allows the poem to come

3
DIBBUKIM (DIBBIKS)

spirits of the dead lights
flickering (he said) their ruakh
will never leave the earth
instead they crowd the forests the fields
around the privies the hapless spirits
wait millions of souls
turned into ghosts at once
the air is full of them
they are standing each one beside a tree
under its shadows or the moon's
but they cast no shadows of their own
this moment & the next they are pretending
to be rocks but who is fooled
who is fooled here by the dead the jews
the gypsies the leadeyed polish patriot
living beings reduced to symbols
of what it had been to be alive
"o do not touch them" the mother cries
fitful, as almost in a dream
she draws the child's hand to her heart
in terror but the innocent dead
grow furious they break down doors
drop slime onto your tables
they tear their tongues out by the roots

& smear your lamps your children's lips
with blood a hole drilled in the wall
will not deter them
from stolen homes stone architectures
they hate they are the convoys of the dead
the ghostly drivers still searching
the roads to malkin ghost carts overturned
ghost autos in blue ditches
if only our eyes were wild enough
to see them our hearts to know their terror
the terror of the man who walks alone
their victim whose house whose skin
they crawl in incubus & succubus
a dibbik leaping from a cow to lodge inside
his throat clusters of jews
who swarm here mothers without hair
blackbearded fathers
they lap up fire water slime
entangle the hairs of brides
or mourn their clothing hovering
over a field of rags half-rotted shoes
& tablecloths old thermos bottles rings
lost tribes in empty synagogues
at night their voices
carrying across the fields
to rot your kasha your barley
stricken beneath their acid rains
no holocaust because no sacrifice
no sacrifice to give the lie
of meaning & no meaning after auschwitz
there is only poetry no hope
no other language left to heal
no language & no faces
because no faces left no names
no sudden recognitions on the street
only the dead still swarming only khurban
a dead man in a rabbi's clothes
who squats outside the mortuary house
who guards their privies who is called

master of shit an old alarm clock
hung around his neck who holds
a wreathe of leaves under his nose
from eden "to drive out
"the stinking odor of this world"

4
NOKH AUSCHWITZ (AFTER AUSCHWITZ)

the poem is ugly & they make it uglier
wherein the power resides
that duncan did—or didn't—understand
when listening that evening to the other poet read
he said "that was pure ugliness" & oh it was
it was & it made my heart skip a beat
because the poem wouldn't allow it no
not a moment's grace nor beauty to obstruct
whatever the age demanded or the poem
shit poured on wall & floor
sex shredded genitals torn loose by dog claws
& the ugliness that you were to suffer
later that they had suffered
not as dante dreamed it but in the funnel
they ran through & that the others called
the road to heaven little hills & holes now
& beneath upon among them
broken mirrors kettles pans enamelled tea pots
the twisted candlesticks of sabbath
prayershawl scraps & scraps of bodies bones
his child's he said leaping
into the mud the pool of bones
& slime the frail limbs separating
each time he pulls at one the mystery of body
not a mystery bodies naked then bodies
boned & rotten how he must fight
his rage for beauty must make a poem
so ugly it can drive out the other voices
like Artaud's squawk the poem addressed

to ugliness must resist
even the artistry of death a stage set
at Treblinka ticket windows a large clock
the signs that read: change for Bialystok
but the man cries who has seen
the piles of clothing jews
it is not good it is your own sad meat
that hangs here poor & bagged like animals
the blood coagulated into a jell
an armpit through which a ventricle has burst
& left him dangling screaming
a raw prong stuck through his tongue
another through his scrotal sac he sees
a mouth a hole a red hole
the scarlet remnants of the children's flesh
their eyes like frozen baby scallops
so succulent that the blond ukrainian guard
sulking beneath his parasol leaps up
and sucks them inward past his iron teeth
& down his gullet, shitting
globules of fat & shit
that trickle down the pit in which the victim—
the girl without a tongue—stares up
& reads her final heartbreak

DI MAGILAS FUN AUSCHWITZ (THE SCROLLS OF AUSCHWITZ)

He had vanished & reappeared in a room no bigger than a giant's hand. Asleep in it. His arms & legs were rusted, his eyes swam in his head like mercury. He was twice forgotten. A stranger to his memory of who he was.

When a man moves up & down across the field, the earth moves with him. The condition is described as double thunder—repeated by the ones called souls, the hopeless dead. It is most likely they who move, the rest is an illusion. The stranger in the giant's hand knows who they are.

Dibbik legions perch on trees. The trees die. Then the sun gives birth to basilisks. A basilisk gives birth to what the rock conceals. True life is punctuated. It eats through time & breeds out of the sun. The sexual is its other head worn on its other body. It is your body too & tries to run from you. You brush against it with your hand.

Once the dibbik was a singular occurrence. It is now repeated many million times as the result of so much early death. Into whom do the dead souls enter? Each one contains a dibbik, or some of them contain a world of dibbiks. Hijikata writes: "To make the gestures of the dead, to die again, to make the dead enact their deaths again, this is what I want to feel. The dead are my teachers & live inside me."

A hand is like a hole. I know it & he knows it too. Was he there? No. No more than I was. But the dead have found him & eaten through his skin. He feels them in the morning when he shits: a gnawing pain beneath his heart. The dead who were burnt alive are still the hopeless dead. Thus the ceremony-of-burning is a lie. And thus the holocaust.

In the dream 3000 naked women cry in pain. It is impossible to count them but he does. Their bodies will be used for kindling, their blood for fuel. No one will cry or turn away, but sometimes the wind will force a tear out of his eye, & his tongue & teeth will follow, flying from his mouth. "Ah," the young girl will say, her legs twisted behind her back. "The tear of a live Jew will go with me to my death."

The room he looked into now was still smaller. It looked like a regular shower room with all the accoutrements of a public bathhouse. The walls of the room were covered with small, white tiles.. It was very fine, clean work. The floors were covered with orange terra cotta tiles. Nickle-plated metal faucets were set into the ceiling.

It was in Poland that I realized I was haunted. Yes. "A dibbik is in me. A dibbik is in me." It

is the condition of our lives for forty years now. Hijikata confirms it for us, that poetry is the speech of ghosts. The shamans in your books confirm it. In *my* books I meant to say. And didn't.

[Gradowski's Testament] A black & white world, sky & earth. The court of angry shadows. These. Broken into. The open mouth of earth prepared to swallow us alive. The last. His world a tinted film. A bent black mass. Black shadows. Swallowed up in railroad cars. Gradowski's testament. Along the white road. Thousands crawling on all fours. Two women at the roadside, crying. People shrunk to half their size. A finger moves across her throat. "Take interest in this document. Keep looking. You will find still more."

From now on we will bury everything in the earth.

In 1987 I was a decade, more, past POLAND/1931. I went to Poland for the first time & to the small town, Ostrow-Mazowiecz, sixty miles northeast of Warsaw, from which my parents had come in 1920. The town was there and the street, Miodowa (meaning "honey"), where my father's parents had a bakery. I hadn't realized that the town was only fifteen miles from Treblinka, but when we went there (as we had to), there was only an empty field & the thousands of large stones that make up the memorial. We were the only ones there except for a group of three people—another family perhaps—who seemed to be picnicking at the side. This was in sharp contrast to the crowds of tourists at Auschwitz (Oswieczim) & to the fullness of the other Poland I had once imagined. The absence of the living seemed to create a vacuum in which the dead—the dibbiks who had died before their time—were free to speak. It wasn't the first time that I thought of poetry as the language of the dead, but never so powerfully as now. Those in my own family had died without a trace—with one exception: an uncle who had gone to the woods with a group of Jewish partisans and who, when he heard that his wife and children were murdered at Treblinka, drank himself blind in a deserted cellar & blew his brains out. That, anyway, was how the story had come back to us, a long time before I had ever heard

a word like holocaust. It was a word with which I never felt comfortable: too Christian & too beautiful, too much smacking of a "sacrifice" I didn't & still don't understand. The word with which we spoke of it was the Yiddish-Hebrew word, khurban [khurbn], & it was this word that was with me all the time we stayed in Poland. When I was writing POLAND/1931, at a great distance from the place, I decided deliberately that that was not to be a poem about the "holocaust." There was a reason for that, I think, as there is now for allowing my uncle's khurban to speak through me. The poems that I first began to hear at Treblinka are the clearest message I have ever gotten about why I write poetry. They are an answer also to the proposition—by Adorno & others—that poetry cannot or should not be written after Auschwitz. Our search since then has been for the origins of poetry, not only as a willful desire to wipe the slate clean but as a recognition of those other voices & the scraps of poems they left behind them in the mud.

The Arts Foundation of Michigan, a private funding agency which supports Michigan artists, welcomes *Sulfur* magazine to its new home in Michigan and is proud to provide financial support for this issue. To receive information on the AFM's funding programs, please call Kimberly Adams at (313) 871-0559 or write AFM, 542 New Center Building, 7430 Second, Detroit, MI 48202.

afM

CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

The Roses of Kádár

In June, 1986, Caryl Eshleman and I were invited to spend a month in Hungary by the Soros Foundation in NYC. The idea of the visit, as well as contact with the Foundation, came from our friend Gyula Kodolányi, whom we had met while he was a Fulbright Fellow at UC Santa Barbara in 1985. I went over some English versions of Gyula's poems with him (they had been done without his participation by people in England). By detailed questioning of this word or that word, asking Gyula to tell me (in his quite good English) exactly what the Hungarian word meant, and how it functioned in a line, I was able to ascertain whether the English translator had done accurate work or whether he had "improvised" upon the original. Over the years, I have found that I enjoy translating as a communal activity; given the doubleness of the textual situation, it has increasingly, for several reasons, seemed appropriate to work with a second or even a third person. Cotranslating is also a good way to get to know another writer or scholar. The text and its translation become a kind of meeting place in which two people can intermingle. As Robert Kelly put it, in Section 2 of *The Loom:*

> Third Surface
> between the surfaces of our minds
> where the whole
> mystery of talk
> bounds and needs
> the bounce. The shared
> preoccupation. I'm no friend

of heart-to-hearts; for heart
to speak to heart you need
a table. A body. A body
of work. A trade. A box
of swiftian tools.

In the course of several sessions, we moreorless rewrote 15 pages of Gyula's poetry and prose-poetry. He began to read my own poetry, and by the end of the semester, our time with texts was divided between his work and my own. Gyula and I wanted to continue working together, and Gyula and his wife, Maria Illyés (the daughter of the writer, Gyula Illyés), who is a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, wanted us to visit Hungary.

The Soros Foundation paid our air fares and offered us a modest per diem that since we stayed with the Kodolányis almost covered our land expenses. In exchange, they hoped that such a trip would result in some Hungarian writing finding its way into *Sulfur* magazine. There was no plan at the point we arrived in Budapest. Gyula and I decided that we would work together 3 to 4 hours a day, 5 days a week, side by side, at his father-in-law's worktable on the third floor of the Illyés home (which Gyula, Maria and their two children share with her mother and aunt, Gyula Illyés having died in 1983). The third floor, one spacious room, was Illyés's library and workshop, and since it also contains a small apartment, it became Caryl's and my living space. High in the somewhat overgrown residential hills of Buda, we overlooked the Danube River and much of Pest, with a panoramic view of onion-domed towers and the tarantulan architecture of the Parliament Building. Off to our right, literally across the street, behind a tall chain-link fence in a house cascading with roses, surrounded by guard dogs and an invisible patrol: János Kádár, the aging Hungarian Communist leader.

Other than brief trips to Szeged in the south, Köszeg and Sopron in the east, and a week in the Illyés cottage on Lake Balaton, we spent our time with the Kodolányis in Budapest, viewing Hungarian films (with English or French subtitles), visiting museums (a wonderful 100 year retrospective of Hungarian poster art), and trying out restaurants. We also met, with the exception of Géza Szöcs, all of the living Hungarian writers that Gyula and I translated,

as well as several others whose work we did not have time to do anything with (or, in the case of György Konrád, were unable to obtain permission from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for a chapter of his now-being-translated new novel). Gyula suggested that we do one earlier poet, and thus the *Sulfur* section opens with 6 poems by Miklós Radnóti (1909-1944). On the way back from Sopron, north of Györ, we stood in silence for a few minutes before the 7 cracked concrete doors with cobalt-blue interstices that identify the area in which the poet was shot. On the sculptural monument are Radnóti's words: "I lived in an age so ugly, men killed not only on command but for pleasure."

The 5 writers who follow (all poets with the exception of Mészöly who is primarily known as a novelist) span several generations, and strike me at this time, having just touched up our versions, as being of genuine interest to readers and writers of American poetry. I must immediately add, however, that our little selection here is by no means representative of the diversity of contemporary Hungarian poetry, nor does it more than suggest the range of any of the contributors. In roughly 3 weeks, we did first drafts of about 100 pages of writing (Gyula's considered dictation to me, which I wrote down and questioned as we went along). Some of it turned out to be less appropriate for *Sulfur* than Gyula thought it would be, and in a couple cases what we were able to do seemed so slight when compared to the achievement of the writer's body of work, that I decided not to include it. After returning to America, I typed out a second draft, which Gyula corrected. I then made the third drafts that appear in *Sulfur* #21.

Enikö Bollabás, whom I met while she was teaching at UC San Diego in the early 1980s, was in Budapest while we were. She kindly offered to do the Géza Szöcs poem with me, as she is a dear friend of Szöcs. Having visited him in Rumania when he was under house arrest, and having been at times-his one correspondent (via smuggled notes) in the world, she was acutely familiar with his work and especially sensitive to the poem on the murder of Arpád Visky.

In two cases I have included material that I myself did not work on. Since I was unaware of the plight of Hungarians in Rumania before our visit, I feel that others might be also, and thus I have included Enikö's report on Szöcs' situation. I have also included an essay/statement by Csoóri on writer, nation, and state, to offer the American reader Csoóri's sense of the situational differences for the

Hungarian and the American writer. It is translated by László Hámos, who is President of the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation in NYC, which is an outgrowth of the Committee for Human Rights in Rumania, an organization which has monitored the condition of the rights of national minorities in that country since 1976.

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As an American who was suddenly and crudely educated as to the complicated depths of American imperialistic permeation of much of the rest of the world while I was in Peru, in 1965, I have learned to be cautious in regard to judgments on how it is to live and to be in countries where all life forms are to varying degrees haunted by the "interests" of one or both of the two world powers. I spent a little time in Czechoslovakia in 1976 and again in 1979. Other than what is left of the spectral power of Prague (the old Jewish cemetery there ought to be visited by every poet in the world), life in Czechoslovakia struck me as agonizingly monolithic grey. The fact that the poet Vladimír Holan had, between 1948 and 1963, gone out of his house twice, seemed symbolic of the cut-off between the life of the mind and the life of the state. During this period of time when his writing was unpublishable and his previous books unavailable, Holan looked at the walls within walls and spoke with Shakespeare, producing his poetic masterpiece, "A Night with Hamlet," a 50 page poem which on its surface has nothing to do with the political surface of the 1950s, but whose depths, in massive oblique waves, contain the pessimism of a great world poet struggling against terrible odds to maintain a feel and respect for the human spirit. I was introduced to Holan's poetry by a young Czech scholar, Jan Benda, who subsequently introduced me to his friend, the young poet Milan Exner. I was only in Czechoslovakia for about 5 weeks total, but certain almost black and white differences between our situation as writers and theirs seemed evident, and in a poem written in 1979, "Master Hanus to his Blindness," I tried to express them:

> Poets in Czechoslovakia are deprived of expressing
> their pain, are made to lie to publish.
> Where does the pain go that they are not expressing?

In the same way that I cannot forgive
the Nazis because I was not in their camps,
I cannot know the pain of deprived expression.
I can embrace Jan and Milan and feel
the extent to which the bow has been drawn
and sense the filings in the soot
collecting along the unsent arrow shaft.
I know another kind of pain,
the anxiety that comes from knowing anything
can be said, that cutting into is merely shaving,
the poet as a kind of barber,
sanding the druidic off the giant,
who considers who is to live in Viet-X.
You cannot speak versus
you can say anything and it does not matter.
What is not permitted
gnaws at the ears of those
through whom the able-to-speak
passes without effect.

In contrast, the range of sensations that I picked up as a one month tourist in 1986 Hungary was much more dimensional—and much more complicated. In Czechoslovakia there was simply no cream in the coffee; in Hungary there is, but whenever the creature comforts increase, a feeling of dread accompanies them. The more permissive the current Soviet government becomes, the more many Hungarians feel that an end is in sight. Keep in mind that as a result of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, two-thirds of the territory belonging to historical Hungary was annexed by Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia. To be a Hungarian citizen today is to be in a small, land-locked country immediately surrounded by countries containing millions of Hungarian minorities whose culture is being eliminated. Beyond this immediate "girdle," is the Soviet juggernaut, and in spite of daily attempts on the part of the Soviet-directed Hungarian government to suppress in living memory the terror of the late 1940s and the mid-1950s, people stubbornly remember these periods and believe they could return overnight.

While in California, Kodolányi told me that there was no censorship in Hungarian publishing—as long as you stayed away from politics and pornography. At the time, I thought of these two

restrictions in America relative to definable areas with fuzzy boundaries. Amiri Baraka, I think many would agree, is a "political" poet; Charles Olson is not. Or to put it in a slightly different frame: here one might say that while Denise Levertov has written "political" poems, she is essentially a "religious" poet. In Hungary today, my impression is that Olson would be considered a very political poet on the basis that *The Maximus Poems* remember a massive amount of history. In Hungary, as an artist in any field, one cannot directly (or even indirectly, unless very subtly) refer to those aspects of Hungarian history that the USSR-directed government does not want remembered. All "story" in Hungary is political by the omission of the "something" in the past which happened to the Hungarian people.

After a couple of weeks in Budapest, I decided that what Gyula Kodolányi meant by "pornography" was closer to what we would mean here by "sexuality," "obscenity," or "the Erotic." For years I have admired the works of certain Hungarian second-generation psychoanalytical thinkers such as Sandor Ferenczi, Géza Róheim, and Melanie Klein (all of whom appear in concert in the opening chapters of N.O. Brown's *Love's Body* which I reread while in Budapest). None of these writers' works are now available in Hungary, and no one I met there was familiar with their work; most people had never heard of them. Exact comparisons are impossible here, but for a moment think of the American figures of the 20s, 30s, and 40s, that you most associate with opening up areas in psychology, sexuality, anthropology, etc., and then think of these figures as being totally erased. My hunch is that Ferenczi, for example, has not disappeared because his writing is of no interest now, but because he is the author of the audacious and sexually visionary *Thalassa*. In Hungary, I was told, psychoanalysis never caught hold, and the writings of the Freudian circle have been unavailable from the 1940s on.

While I do not feel that Kodolányi intentionally misled me by his comments on censorship when in California, it now strikes me that if one moreorless equates political with historical, and pornographic with sexual, his statement should be changed to: there is no censorship as long as one does not express anything really relevant to thoughtful people! As an absolute statement, this may be pushing it a bit too far. In fact, I hope that the Hungarian writing in *Sulfur* #21 argues against such a blanket statement. Again, another

complication arises: although he is nationally known as an artist who speaks out for human rights, Csoóri is not allowed to be seen on TV, and his writing is seldom published in newspapers. He is allowed to publish only in places with a controlled small circulation. As the government is in charge of all publication and distribution, many things may be published to remain in warehouses unseen by the public. Relative to Czechoslovakia or Russia, Csoóri's freedom to circulate his work would seem considerable; from the viewpoint of the Hungarians, he is viewed as a writer who is continually frustrated and undermined by the state.

It thus appears that the state alter ego for a Hungarian artist is much more visible and surface-wise resistant than for an American artist. However, it may also be true that we Americans have an invisible state alter ego that we are seldom aware of other than in periods of national conscientiousness (in my own time: the arts movement against American aggression in Vietnam).

Generalizations are the enemy of the soul, and all of us are probably too automatically reactive to them when we feel that they are being thrust upon us in such a way as to endanger our sense of our individual identity. When Peruvian poets attacked America in a monolithic way when I was in Lima in 1965, I understood and agreed, but I also ended up, probably pointlessly, arguing No it is not all like that. I imagine that Kodolányi was attempting to offer a more complex image of Hungary than he figured I had, in California, when he made his comments on censorship. What is remarkable is that in spite of the maze of restrictions and complications, a sense of the duress of the Hungarian soul continues to emerge, especially in writing and in films (where attempts at sexual expression and definition are inevitably portrayed as damned). None of the writers I met struck me as morbid or totally defeated.

The most severe image I came away with was that underlying all the conversations that I participated in was a fear of saying what was on the participants' minds, that is, a fear behind the subject of fear, that if we discussed fear there would always remain a fear of a transpersonal, political nature, that could not come out—at least in my presence. Now we all know that all people have fear, and that it is a rare artist, in any society, who can create even a single arena of activity in which he can be fearless. But what I am trying to get at here is a sense of instilled fear that makes one cautious all the

time, boarding a streetcar, ordering a meal, touching a sweetheart, speaking with a foreigner. American writers, for the most part certainly, do not give the impression that they are constantly looking over their shoulder, while they write, or while they board that so-called streetcar. Is it because we live in a superpower which is daily radiating outwards, away from our own tiny, fragile centers, the transcendental, holocaustal beams of a planetary negation? Is it because, as Americans, we are ingredients in a formula of mono-cultural aggression, that it is next to impossible—especially for the white heterosexual male, who regardless of who he is now bears the stigmata as the devil who is loose in the world—to step out of the dimensions of power and grasp what it is to be in a place where looking outwards *and inwards* is to primarily face the Babels-built-to-Heaven called America and the USSR?

[November, 1987]

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MIKLOS RADNOTI, one of the major Hungarian poets of this century, was born in Budapest in 1909 (his mother as well as his twin brother died during his birth). Raised by relatives, he attended the University of Szeged, and in 1937 lived in Paris for a year. As a Jew, Radnóti was occasionally enrolled in forced labor battalions after Hungary's entry into WW II. In 1944, he was transported by the Nazis to work in the Bor mines in Serbia, and near the end of the war, he was moved from Serbia towards Germany on a forced march. On November 9, 1944, exhausted and diseased, Radnóti was shot by the guards and buried in a mass grave near the city of Györ in Western Hungary. After the war, the grave was opened, and a notebook containing some of this greatest poems was found in his trenchcoat pocket. While sympathetic with avant-garde poetics (especially Apollinaire), Radnóti came into maturity as a poet when, in the early Thirties, Hungarian poetry turned toward closed forms again. While Attila József and Gyula Illyés renewed closed form through colloquial expressions and folk poetry, Radnóti, along with István Vas and Lörinc Szabó, brought a contemporary edge to iambic forms and to classical Greek meters, which Hungarian, with

its flexible syntactic structure and variety of short and long sounds, is able to use without constraints and inversions. With five collections, Radnóti is perhaps the most widely translated Hungarian poet in English-speaking countries. However, the translational challenge to bring over the meanings implied in his manipulation of closed forms into contemporary open form poetry still remains fresh.

[GK]

MIKLOS MESZOLY, born in 1921, was raised in the town of Szekszard, near the Danube. He was in the Army during WW II, taken prisoner of war, and escaped from prison camp. While he began to write in the late Forties, he did not publish regularly until the end of the Fifties. His first novel, *Death of an Athlete* (1963), brought him publication in France and West Germany; his second novel, *Saulus* (1967), is a densely-written stream of consciousness work about St. Paul. Since then his books have appeared roughly every three years. His interest in poetry is recent. Like Sándor Csoóri and György Konrád, Mészöly is a major contributor with his essays to the ongoing intellectual debate about recent Hungarian history, the present society and the state of literature.

[GK]

FERENC JUHASZ, born in 1928, was raised in Bia, a village near Budapest. After WW II he studied in Budapest, published his first poems and was hailed as a prodigy of Hungarian poetry. While book-length collections appeared in 1954, 1955, and 1956, Juhász's reputation as a major 20th century poet rests on *Struggle with The White Lamb* (1964), which contains "The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries Out at the Gates of Morning," called by W.H. Auden, a very different poet, one of the great poems of our time. Selections of Juhász's work were published almost simultaneously in English in 1970 by Penguin and Oxford University Press. Juhász's central ambition is to be a modern epic poet, to write books of the universe. The recurring experience moving his writing is a fascination and horror over the forms and processes of life on both microcosmic and

macrocosmic levels, the cells and the stars, which he describes with unparalleled mastery. The stage between, however, the human level, is often devoid of the personal, the individual elements that could make his poetry dramatically cogent. While his work is increasingly expansive, he occasionally publishes poems of the humanity and concentration of "The Biography of a Woman," a short work by his standards. He is the editor of the literary monthly *Uj Irás* (New Writing) in Budapest.

[GK]

SANDOR CSOORI, born in 1930 in Zámoly, Transdanubia, departed from his peasant background by winning a scholarship to the famous Calvinist grammar school of Papa in 1943. After a brief span at college he worked as a journalist and editor in Budapest, looking with growing dismay at the destruction Stalinism brought to Hungarian villages. In the Sixties he wrote several screen plays, including *Eighty Hussars* and *Ten Thousand Suns* (the latter which won a Grand Prix at Cannes in 1968). As a poet, he is one of the most articulate representatives in Hungary of the so-called "Folk Surrealism," a modernist esthetics which builds on archaic elements in folk art, and regards as its forerunners artists like Béla Bartók and Garcia Lorca. At the same time, Csoóri is an alert and active intellectual, whose daring essays probe the spiritual and political situation of Hungary, often reflecting on the plight of Hungarian minorities living in Rumania and Czechoslovakia. He has often been in political disgrace, with books suspended and writings banned. The central theme of Csoóri's writing is the relationship between history, national and individual consciousness, and the distortions politics bring about in this relationship. In 1982, his poem of solidarity with the Polish people was published in the *New York Times*.

[GK]

GYULA KODOLANYI, born in 1942, was raised and educated in Budapest. He began to write and to translate poetry in the early

Sixties, and in 1969 went to England on a British Council scholarship, where Charles Tomlinson and Tom Raworth influenced his reading. In 1972-73, as an ACLS Fellow, he did research in the United States on Pound and Williams, and met Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley and Denise Levertov, all of whom he has subsequently translated. His first and only collection of poetry appeared in 1981. He has edited books by Henry Adams, Lewis Mumford and William Carlos Williams in Hungarian translation, as well as an anthology of American poetry from Roethke to Creeley. Although he believes in the importance of the reader and the social commitment of the writer, he is one of the most experimental of living Hungarian poets, influenced by Olson's Projective Verse proposals. His prose poetry is multi-layered, and densely esoteric, which he claims is to some extent a reaction against the inane transparency of the official literature of his youth. In 1984-85, he was a Fulbright Fellow at UC Santa Barbara; while in California he taped extensive interviews with Jerome Rothenberg, Clayton Eshleman, and Michael Palmer.

[CE]

GEZA SZOCS, born in 1953, is the most prominent Transylvanian writer of his generation, with five collections of poetry published in Bucharest, Budapest and New York. While living in Cluj, Rumania, from 1981 to 1983, he edited 10 issues of the scandalous and politically suicidal underground periodical, ***Ellenpontok*** (Counterpoints), the first and thus far only samizdat to appear in Ceaucescu's totalitarian Rumania. From 1983 to 1986, Szöcs lived under house arrest, with all his hand-written material (and blank paper) confiscated; he was often interrogated 10 hours a day. In 1986, he was able to leave Rumania and now lives in West Germany.

ARPAD VISKY, the subject of "Commentary on an Old Review," was, until his arrest in January, 1983, the leading actor of the Sepsiszentgyörgy Hungarian Theater Company in Transylvania, Rumania. Imprisoned on false political charges (he had insulted members of the Rumanian secret police on duty in the cafeteria of

the theater), he spent the next two years in Danube-delta labor camps. After his release in the fall of 1984, he was banned from performing on any stage in Rumania and was forced to work as an unskilled laborer. On January 5, 1986, the Rumanian authorities staged a suicide: Visky's body was found hung in a remote forest outside Sepsiszentgyörgy by a local policeman minutes after the onset of death. His wife was not allowed to view the body. Prior to his death, Visky had repeatedly been denied emigration to Hungary.

[EB & LH]

ENIKO BOLLABAS teaches at the József Attila University in Szeged, Hungary, and has traveled extensively in the United States, doing research on Americana and John Muir, before and after teaching stints at UC San Diego and the University of Oregon. She has published one book: *Tradition and Innovation in American Free Verse: Whitman to Duncan* (Budapest, 1986).

[CE]

MIKLOS RADNOTI

Six Poems

ANXIOUSLY AUTUMN ARRIVES

Out of enraged, iron-colored flags
the sun whirls anxiously, belching vapor
—and the light flitting away
bites into plummeting fog.

Disheveled clouds, the sky mirror
rippled by wind. Blue streaks off.
A swallow in low swoops
ready to depart writes a shrieking note.

Anxiously autumn arrives.
Rust lifts and sinks on the foliage.
Heavenly breath is cool.
The sky, coldly, merely smokes—
the sun now no more potent than a sigh.

Lizards scurry the fat cemetery walls.
The flesh-robbing fury of gluttonous
autumnal wasps drones, and glows.

Men sitting on the banks of ditches
watch the deep fires of death,
the smell of dense mold is already afloat.

Flames dart over the road fluttering half-light half-blood!
Burning brown leaves
buck weakly in the wind.

Clusters fall, vine shoots withering,
the stalks of yellow flowers rattle
as the seeds spin off.

The meadow swims in twilit mist.
Savage clatter of distant wagons
shaking off the last leaves.

The countryside fallen asleep,
death glides in on white, beautiful wings,
the sky nurses the garden.
And in your hair: look! A golden autumn leaf—
a branch wept above you.

O dearest, flare about autumn, above death,
and lift me too! Have the wisdom to love
now, the wisdom to kiss, to hunger for sleep.

Love joyfully, don't leave me—
plunge with me into the blackened sky of sleep.
Let *us* sleep. Outside: the thrush is already dozing,
walnuts drop onto leaf-mold now
without a tap—and reason deteriorates.

10 October 1941

THE ANGEL OF DREAD

Today, the angel of dread, invisible,
and silent in me, does not shriek.
But, at a squeak, you are startled—
at merely the snap of a grasshopper
you turn, but who was it?
It was him. Only, today he is cautious—but poised!
Protect me because you love me. Love me heroically.
When you are with me, he sulks; he is fierce
when you leave me alone. He rises from the pit of the soul

and, screaming, accuses me.
Madness. Working into me like poison,
rarely letting up. Living inside,
also outside. When a moonlit night is white,
in whizzing sandals he dashes the meadow,
rummaging about in my mother's grave.
"Was it worth it?" he keeps asking her,
rousing her, whispering, inciting her, strangling:
"You gave birth to him and it killed you!"
Occasionally, he looks at me,
tearing off the calendar pages that were awaiting their turn.
How far and where to
now depend upon him forever. His word,
a stone into water,
dropped into my heart last night,
gyring, swinging, revolving.
I was just about to go to bed,
you were already asleep. I stood still,
naked, when he arrived
and began to quietly argue with me here.
A peculiar scent was afloat, a chilling
breath at my ear. "Keep on undressing,"
he urged, "not even skin should defend you—
you are, after all, raw flesh and bare nerve.
Flay yourself, for he is a fool
who brags about his skin, his prison.
Skin is only an *appearance* about you.
Come on! Take this knife—
it won't hurt, will only take a minute, one wince!"

On the table, in a blaze, the knife awakened.

4 August 1943

SEVENTH ECLOGUE

Do you see? Evening falls, fringed with barbed-wire
the hacked-out oak fence and barracks waver, sucked up by dusk.
The framework of our captivity is undone by a hesitant gaze
and the mind alone—the mind alone—knows the tautness of the wire.
Do you see, dearest, imagination here can free itself only this way.
By dreaming, that beautiful liberator, our broken bodies are unleashed,
in that moment the prison camp starts home!
In rags, heads shaved, snoring, the prisoners fly
from Serbia's blind heights to the hiding homelands.
The *hiding* homelands? O *is* our home still there?
Maybe no bomb touched it? Might it *be,* as when we were drafted?
The one groaning on my right, the one sprawling on my left, will they return home?
Tell me, *is* there still a homeland where this hexameter will be understood?

Without accent marks, feeling out line after line,
here, in the dusk, I write this poem just as I live,
blindly, a caterpillar inching my way on the paper.
Flashlight, book, everything taken away by the Lagar guards,
and there's no mail—only fog settles on our barracks.
Among false rumors and worms, here in the mountains live
Frenchmen, Poles, loud Italians, Serbian separatists, and brooding Jews,
a chopped up, fevered body, still living *one* life,
waiting for good news, woman's beautiful word, free human fate,
waiting for the end that drops into dense twilight, for the *miracle.*

I am lying on a plank, a captive animal among worms,
the fleas' assault starts up again, but the army of flies are at rest.

It is night, one day shorter again, you see,
and, one day shorter, life. The camp is sleeping. The landscape
lit by the moon. In its light, the wire is again taut.
One can see through the window, cast on the wall,
shadows of armed guards passing among the night sounds.

The camp is sleeping, do you see, dearest, dreams are rustling,
a startled man snorts, tosses about in his tight space,
already back to sleep, his face radiates. Only I sit up awake,
I feel a half-smoked cigarette in my mouth instead of the taste of
your kiss,
and sleep, the comforter, does not come,
for I cannot die nor live without you anymore.

Lagar Heidenau, in the mountains
above Žagubica, July 1944.

ROOT

Through the root power flashes unseen,
the root drinks rain, feeds on earth
and its dream is falling white snow.

Earth-embedded it strives to burst earth,
it crawls cunningly, the root does,
its arm like uncoiling rope.

On the root's arm, a worm sleeps,
on the root's foot, a worm sits.
The world becomes wormy, wormsick.

But below, the root lives on and on,

it is not concerned with the world,
only with a foliage-lush branch.

That branch it feeds and adores,
sending up delicious flavors,
sweet, heavenly flavors. . .

I too am a root now,
I'm living among worms,
down there this poem is being formed.

I was a flower. I became a root.
Leaden, black soil covers me,
my fate has been fixed.
A saw shrieks above my head.

Lager Heidenau, in the mountains
above Žagubica, August 8, 1944.

SERBIAN POSTCARD 1

From Bulgaria, the roll of thick, wild cannon blasts
beat against the ridge, resonate, fade. . .
humans beasts wagons thoughts amass,
the road rears whinnying, maned sky bolts.
In this mobile chaos you are constant in me,
in the pit of my consciousness you shine, motionless
forever, mute, like the angel, while admiring destruction,
or an insect, burying itself in the cavity of a tree's decay.

30 August 1944, in the mountains

FORCED MARCH

He is a fool who, collapsed on the ground, gets up and walks
on,
like a wandering pain, he moves ankle and knee,
yet starts out again, like one lifted by wings.
In vain, the ditch invites him, he doesn't dare to stay,
and if you ask him: why not? maybe he will still answer
he's expected by his wife, and by a wiser, more beautiful death.
But, this simple soul *is* a fool, for, over the homes,
a long time, scorched wind has been twisting,
the house wall has stretched out, the plum tree snapped,
the homeland night is woolly with fear. . .
O if only I could believe: not only in *my* heart do I bear all
that is worthwhile, and: there *is* a home to return to. . .
If it were still there as before, on the ancient cool veranda
the bees of peace would drone, while plum jam chills,
an end-of-summer quiet would sunbathe the drowsy garden,
among the foliage, fruit would sway naked,
Fanni would wait blondely before the russet hedge
and slow morning would write a shadow slowly. . .
surely it still can perhaps be! The moon tonight so immensely
full!
Don't go on without me, my friends, shout at me!
And I push on. . .

Bor, September 15, 1944

MIKLOS MESZOLY

Ode to the Elegy

Prince, slow down,
amidst the neglected islands, sea is eternal

Were there anyone to address, this would be my message,
over the whitened meadow, above the grey sky,
the sun is a golden plate hammered translucent

Ophelia is dead,
smiling, she watches the dead son

"Dearest,
if it is words you want,
'I love you.'
I always must cry
because I could not hear you
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
You are so sad
that for you another's sorrow can also be
a distraction and a task,
and your joy does not save you either.
Last evening, I visited your room and glanced into your
wardrobe.
It was empty.
I saw only the falling, torn sleeve of a shirt there,
like the arm of a buried man.
Since then, I have been crying."

Once galloping horses erased to their breasts
stirred up the foam of blue waters—summer!
The foster-children of Neptune running without legs,
horses dreaming of earth amidst the spumy spray—
where hemlock grows, the emerald is used for fodder,
as well as brown, stiff-stemmed cornflowers. . .

Just sit in your castle, Prince,
and dream the real.

Your courier asks:
what is so good about being broken on the rack,
for what the embalming of slices,
the garlanded silence of disheveled bouquets,
the Indian-fleet reproof,
and the soot design on the cooled embers of the heart?

Your courier does not understand this composition.

However, it is a mere deluge of sun when
according to the orders of the dark sky
the glittering golden plate that has come to life from its own
shreds
tears an unexpected slit into the solid collar of darkness.
It flings up and drops
the gossamer strings of
their farewell etched by a blade.

Your courier does not understand this music.

The siesta of the Moerae now takes place.
Perishing looms,
virgins whoring without pleasure,
three dull angels with shadows under their eyes,
Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos,
their helpless siesta now takes place—
their hands in their laps,
their hemp entangled,
robes torn,
they do not know what crying is,
they do not know what a wardrobe is—
they are Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos,
hibernating non-sleepers, the sleepless ones,
only the bloody gentleness in their fingers,
on their faceless faces the dark of eyes that never were,
in their hearts sootless designs—

they are Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos,
yet they are also our dear ones,
the god's concubines,
in their kisses time rots.

For this is how everything is, Prince.
It is too late for anything else.

AN AUXILIARY ODE

When the banked glitter, in the month of winter,
draws near with tumbling winds
and covers your mounds like a Mohawk bison
of the distant Americas,
who receives with lowered head
the imperial splendor and does not stir
until a vast snowy silence covers it
and the terrible moon decays into rusty shreds—

Prince! In a fairy mirror: the albatross wing
of spilling nothingness, of the beautiful,
is already lifting. . .

1986

FERENC JUHASZ

The Biography of a Woman

She bore three sons. Has two sons. Was twenty-five
when she buried the third. Then, the children were given
chocolate milk. For breakfast! Chocolate milk and crescent rolls.
Sunday. The man
did not drink wine. He drank onion tea from a white porcelain
mug.
A mug of red onion water. This was the onion tea.
The red onion a smelly ball in the onion juice.
The man ate the onion too. The Globe that death ate.
He was operated upon two years ago. They cut out one lung.
Onions were requested, eggs, lard. Then the man drank
a cup of coffee, into the coffee he had put a soupspoon of lard,
into the coffee he had broken an egg. He mixed it all with the
spoon, drank it.
But, he did not drink wine. The family was sitting around the
kitchen table.
Jánoska was ten months old. Brain fever. Death.
Jánoska in a tiny blue coffin. In a tiny blue coffin on the table in
the room.
Jánoska a wax lily. Jánoska a wax rose.
Jánoska a wax bear. A blond wax bear. Jánoska a yellow wax
lizard.
A scaly newborn lizard. Jánoska a white-crested newt. Jánoska a
dwarf-
Christmas-tree. Jánoska frozen angel hair. Jánoska a praying
tadpole.
His wax fingers clasped in prayer. Tiny wax hands like a rainy
slate tent.
His wax smile, black murky night. On his wax eyelids
the dew of holy water, like diamond dust on the tail of our
Galaxy.
On Jánoska's ice heart nose tip a red goblin sits. And the patent-
leather booted

goblin has seven heads, on seven scaly green towers, seven heads.
On seven necks, seven heads. On each head the face of an angel.
On each angel face a green gold beard. And there are fourteen eyeballs in the seven angel faces.
Like spinning tops, the goblin angel dragon heads turn.
Their eyes: Judgment, Grief, Fever, Slobbering, Crying, Coughing,
Mercilessness, Vomiting, Consciousness, Diarrhea, Heavy-breathing,
Guilty conscience, Accusation, Death. Jánoska a milky ear of corn with a blond
silky beard. And mournful butterfly wings with fiery rings
pinned with a silver safety-pin to the back of the dragon angel goblin.
Under the fiery ringed butterfly wings, red dragonfly wings:
pinned there with a silver safety-pin. The window in the room open.
Through the window in the door, people looking. Children on tiptoes.
Adults wiping their noses. On the white crocheted window curtain,
the white crocheted wings of praying angels crocheted from squares of yarn
flapping numbly. The bell tolls. The death bell.
In the farmyard, those who came for the funeral are gathering.
Already there: the little blue Saint-John-carrying Blue Saint Michael's Horse.
And the horses drawing the Horse are girls clad in white,
with white myrtle wreaths, white rose wreaths, on their heads.
Their hair let down to their shoulders, to their waists. Their plaits unbraided. And let down.
She was a servant girl, a day-laborer girl, a brick-layer girl,
she worked at the sack-sewing factory and she also worked in a chocolate factory. She cooked,
she did the laundry, washed dishes, cleaned the house, a child-servant. Ten years old, with
a Jewish family. She waxed floors. Escorted the older girls to school.

Carried their suitcases, their net bags. "Those girls always ran
away,
they also ate dates." When the family was not at home, she
would sit at
the piano, striking at the keys with her red child hands.
Proletarian girl Chopin, proletarian girl Franz Liszt, proletarian
girl Arthur
Rubenstein. Dishwater, lye, soapy water, corridor-scrubbing
water,
frost: these tiled red gloves on her hands. Red animal gloves for
her hands.
She carried mortar in a cement-skinned bucket up to the
scaffoldings,
carried bricks on fodder racks, pushed brick-loaded carts.
"In the sack-sewing factory, I used to wrestle with the other
girls. And my fingers were like
a swollen pin-cushion, the tips of my fingers like little violet
melons.
Masses of pin-prick points. Eddies of pin-wound points."
She traveled to Budapest by train at 5 AM. To the station.
She was blind for five years as a child. If no one led her,
she totter-walked. Like snail tentacles pushing out from eye-
mushrooms,
with a spirally bubbling, her hands, arms, staggered in the air,
smacking well wheels, walls, fence rails, trees, hens, flowers,
and terrified by what they smacked drew back under her tender
armpits.
The others did not take her to a doctor. Nor did she know what
the disease was. She was blind.
A blind little servant with her rich relatives. "You can also see
my blindness in this faded
photo. That's me there in the middle." In the faded photo her
Schwabian relatives:
Uncle János, Aunt Náni. On Uncle János: brown boots, braided
brown trousers,
a short brown coat with skeletal braiding. A yellow shirt with
butterfly-wing
collar. His head bare. Hands on his knees. Eyes light-givingly
dead. On Aunt

Náni: brown-buttoned shoes, a brown skirt reaching to the ground. A brown bodice with
mother-of-pearl rose buttons. Tight short coat. Her head bare.
Her hands on her dyed-blue Schwabian apron, crease-squared from ironing and folding.
The apron like Simon Hantai's creased, folded, drawn out blue, violet, brown and
green canvases! Tile-blue Virgin Mary aprons!
The Virgin Mother's tile-blue Cosmos-apron! The mama-yearnings!
The mama-sobs! The mama-sadnesses! The mama-prayers!
Christmas. Easter. Pentecost. The Lord's Day. The Blessing of the Wheat.
Church Fair. The Assumption. Weddings. Christenings. Funerals. The eyes of
Aunt Náni: light-givingly dead! Between, the blind servant.
The thirteen year old. Her apron a brown child-Universe.
In her right hand a yellow daisy. Her left hand on Uncle János' shoulder.
Around her neck a white four-strand necklace. Her braided brown hair in a basket-wreath.
And her eyes: blind graveyards! Her eyes: blind graveyards! Her eyes:
blind jelly roses! Her eyes: snot blind glass colts. Dead glass calves.
Her eyes: frozen cow mouths. Her eyes: frosty tiny Virgin Mother heads.
Her eyes: blinded visions. Her eyes: the locked diamond-gate of heaven.
Her eyes: the two shut gate-wings of the underworld!
"My mother healed me. She rubbed my eyes with powdered sugar.
She rubbed my eyes with powdered sugar in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, with powdered sugar.
And she put cobwebs on them. Sparrow shit. And pigeon droppings. She put tea-soaked wet
packs on them. Picked herbs, medicinal grass, medicinal flowers, at the pond's edge.
I don't know their names. She made tea out of them, and with the tea kept washing

my blind eyes. She washed them, kept on washing them with hard fingers. My eyes,
like the newborn. Like the newborn when they break out bloodily from a woman.
First their hair, then their faces, then their heads almost exploding
the lower part of her body, according to the faith like Jesus burst
out of damnation, when one's legs are like the arms of the cross
and one rips apart from anus to navel! Mama used to wash my eyes
like mother's blood from the newborn, like embryo grease,
like embryo saliva dirt from the newborn's mouth, like embryo tar from their nostrils.
She hung a sachet of medicinal herbs on a string around my neck.
I used to walk with the scented sachet like a gold chain around my neck.
My friend, Aunt Szabó, led me. And we played with knives, running around
each other with long kitchen knives. With *knives*.
My mother healed my blind eyes!" She took in washing and ironing for money.
Forty kilograms of laundry each week. On Tuesday she washed, on Wednesday
dried the laundry, on Thursday she ironed. The little tanner's sumac was brooding
over its green prehistory near the draw well. And it shed blood in the autumn,
like the face of the crucified Christ, like his temples, his heart wound, his hands, legs, dangling
from the nails. In the yard, on clotheslines suspended between trees, white
towels and white cotton coats used to dry. They also used to dry in the earthen
breath of the attic. In winter, like glass flames—in summer, steaming
pages of an epic. The man used to bring the bundle of clothing.
Drunk, sober, her husband brought it. Brought it in brown wrapping paper,

in a forty kilogram paper bag tied into a big square with knotted string.
He brought it sober, and he brought it drunk. On Monday he brought it home,
on Friday, he took it back. On Friday he took it back, on Monday he brought it home.
He brought it from Budapest. Took it back to Budapest.
Her husband loved wine and soda. He drank this from a big glass.
Beer only at the summer fair when the band was playing. He would sit there,
a grey rabbit-pelt hat tilted back on his head, his tie loosened,
in a white shirt, his jacket on a chair. His shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbows,
up to the red elastic bands. He got off the train, the bundle on his slanting shoulder.
First the train station pub. There: cards. Then on the way home,
another pub. A game of "rex," wine and soda. At the third pub, wine and soda.
Billiards. He chalked the cold black nose of the cue and guffawed
when he hit the white bone ball stylishly. The dog always knew where he was.
It barked one way when he got off the train with the brown bundle
and when he started home staggering, barked another way.
The man used to crawl on all fours in the mud. To chortle in the rain.
He grunted, cried, crawled smilingly. His forehead, his tongue, his mouth,
the inside of his mouth, all were muddy, his shirts and pants, muddy. His genitals muddy. Between
his freckled fingers, webs of mud. His eyeballs also muddy.
But he always brought the bundle. He always took the bundle.
And he could hardly believe she was paid merely four pengos!
The children trembled. The woman: "You tell your father!"
And she threw the alarm clock at him. Her scissors.
Threw the lamp at him, her husband jumping aside, chortling. Like a blazing angel,

like a crazed star. The lamp flew into the front yard. It smashed through the window,
flaming, glass splintered and the front yard was ablaze.
The tanner's sumac ablaze, the jasmine bush, and the roses flamed, the lilies blazed.
"Will I go blind? I have already received my blind person's pension.
I appealed for it, it is due me, it is nothing to be ashamed of, for a poor woman.
But I do not want a blind person's cane, although they want to give me one.
I don't want a white cane or an iron cane, I don't want to grope along with a cane,
to grope along in the fog. Must I tap left, right, with a crooked white iron cane?"
And she gazes into the crystal silence, she gazes with a crystal smile.
Not to where they are, nor where they speak from. Gazes with a savior face,
gazes as if He were there! She gazes with a mist-lit face, gazes with her forehead.
"One of my ears is punctured. A blind and deaf old woman. I have tunnel vision.
The doctor said: 'it doesn't matter, auntie, at least you do not see,
at least you do not see *the evil!*'" And she hoes, digs in the garden,
prunes vines, ties up rose vines, goes to the store,
pickles cucumbers and cans peaches. After the war,
during the *removal,* she was on the "list" too. Had no idea why,
but she *was* on the "list." She sat there on her kitchen stool, having just collected
the eggs, boring her index finger into the hens' bottoms to feel with the tip of her finger
the egg in the hen's body. Or to pull out the fluffy, bloody
lime sphere from the hen's ass, to excite the hen to lay.
She was sitting on the kitchen stool, her husband was poking around in the garden.
In the middle of the kitchen: the big clothes basket with a bunched-up quilt,

pots, mugs, spoons, jam bottles, sausages, all kinds of things.
The basket covered with a gold floral-patterned scarlet bedspread,
tied down all around, like the soaked cellophane of the preserves glass,
with a rubber string, or with a regular string if there was nothing else.
And the neighbor woman came: "I will take the ducks. They will only die here."
Later, between two doors, with her little girl between her knees, a mere five years old,
the neighbor woman stood whimpering. Out in the street, people screamed:
"Her son is a Communist! Hang this one too! Together with her sniveling brat!"
At another time, she was guarding a sick person.
Guarding a schizophrenic. The shield of depression. The snail shell of mania.
The one in a checkered flannel shirt, with yellow corduroy pants, did not eat,
did not drink, just sat. Did not drink, did not eat, just stood.
He was watching the sunset, the brain-evening, for two years. The white mind-midnight.
He slept, read, got up. Slept, read, gazed. Was gazing at winter, at autumn.
Was gazing at summer, at spring. And he began to scream, he ran in September.
In freckled autumn, running, he screamed, sobbing.
He was smashing a whole basket of eggs to the ground. He smashed the eggs
one by one on the stone kitchen floor! He first took one into his hand,
turned it, examining it, balancing the lime bubble on his fingertips,
then smashed it to the stone, as if he had hugely hockered.
He was smashing them, they really splattered, he was smashing them, how they squirted!
Gazing with windhover eyes, gazing with hawk eyes, with snake eyes,
gazing with a knife glance and a spatter, and the kitchen floor

suddenly a yellow glaze, snot honey egg white, suddenly lime shell half-bubbles, suddenly
a lime shell potsherd dunghill. As if a crazed monster had vomited, as if madness
spewed bile on the Universe. The Madness Gall-Bladder was pouring out its stinking fluid.
And his hand was bilely, the wall also spattered with bile. In the yard:
the woman running around. The other one after her. After her with a big knife.
With a pig-killing bayonet! "You whore, whore, whore, you whore!" he yelled,
and she: "he'll jump into the well!" The bayonet belongs to his father, who brought it back
from Isonzo. Where he was shot in the belly. Later he was buried at home.
The hens were also flapping about, they were racing around squawking, the dog wailed on its chain,
the rooster crowed, crowed blackly. Blackly for the third time.
And the pig grunted like a drunken Buddha, and the goose flew
through autumn like the Revelations of Saint John. And the neighbors were watching,
crowding the fence, thronging the pickets, watching and shrieking with laughter.
The woman: an old woman. But a never-old-woman. She has five grandchildren.
Two great-grandchildren. Her hands move easily. Her feet are quick too.
And in her memory, Eden is not Hell! She does not regularly visit the graveyard.
She doesn't love it or hate it. She goes there on All Saint's Day, or on All Soul's.
Takes an armful of flowers, a bouquet for each family grave.
When she gets back home, she washes her hands "because after the graveyard,
one washes one's hands. This is the proper thing to do.
For the graveyard is dirty, the graveyard is dead.
Also, after washing the dead, when we have washed the naked dead,

their faces, breasts, chests, bellies, the maleness, the femaleness, and the thighs,
legs and feet, when we have wiped everything, then we also have to wash our hands."
She is reading something right now. Maybe a book of poems. For she too wrote poems!
"As if I heard it now too: O how proud this girl is!" She reads, looks at
the quiet. As if she were looking at the world through the shaft of a straw.
At the end of the emptiness-stuffing in the yellow straw shaft,
in the air-lens of the round straw husk, in the air-disc,
hardly anything can be seen. Half-orchards, half-photos, half of a long-haired doll
split as if by a sickle, old, hair-torn, one-eyed.
What the emptiness-plate of the round straw husk shows, enclosed in its husk-rim encasement.
One doll nostril. The cotton in the gash between the petals of the celluloid face rose.
And everything is as tiny in the straw ring, in the thin shaft of the straw,
as in the Land of Lilliput. She sees in the way we make light with a torch at night:
the yellow rod of light, the light dust-gold rod painting a little gold
circle on the dark. In the gold rod, a dewy beetle, a daisy,
a dew dust-winged velvet butterfly, a lemon butterfly, a cabbage butterfly.
As the torch light stabs a point of fire into the dark, a gold pin into the night.
She sees as an ophthalmologist does when with a little penlight
he illuminates the eyeball body through the pupil, he sees
the purple blot, the veined disc of the retina, the ribbon-feelered soft
sun disc veined with light. Scarlet map in the dark. Scarlet flower island,
scarlet continent with rivers, the earth from a space ship.
"And tell me, that Allende, was he on the side of the poor?" she asked

brooding. "Of *course,* I saw him once on TV." Maybe she is looking at herself.
Her husband died in her arms, vomited blood, "mama mama," he cried.
There was blood on his chest, blood on the woman's hands. He died in her arms.
After the funeral, they scrubbed the floor until dawn, she and her sister-in-law.
Her mother died in her arms. But she recedes colorfully, like a beautiful dream.
She lived with her younger son, then with her elder son, now with her grown granddaughter.
What does this woman read? This not not-old old woman?
"Like a few thin spikes driven into the soil,
Spires appeared on the horizon at dawn.
But they were so small, that the shepherd boy
Glimpsed them as if peering through a straw!"
Indeed, this is János Arany. Indeed, this is his *The Village Fool!*

1986

NOTE: the words "removal" and "list" refer either to the forced removal to Germany of ethnic German peasants after 1945, because of their assumed complicity with Nazism, or the forced removal in the early 1950s, the Stalinist period, of class aliens to labor camps. Among these, so-called "kulák" families were also removed on extremely unfounded grounds (if there were any grounds for the whole process at all). "List" is the so-called "Kulák list" which every village council kept on record for the regular retaliations, confiscations, and extra taxes that the more well-off farmers were subjected to. The villagers screaming "Her son is a Communist" in the poem are a response to October 1956 when in some cases people sought revenge on Communist neighbors for Stalinist practices.

[GK]

SANDOR CSOORI

Three Works

THE VISITOR'S MEMORIES

I left a piece of my head in that smoky-smelling house, there, right there on the milk-burnt plain of the oven-top, with the bread crust tossed to the dog.

I arrived, uninvited, early in the morning. At first, the waking children merely stared at me from behind the fortifications of their bunched-up quilts: who might I be? what might I want? in what shop did I steal my camomile-yellow shoes? But when I discovered, one by one, their bud-like noses and geranium ears, and before their very eyes did a hairy bear-fist waddle, "grr-grr-grr, my skin is bitten by fleas, the fleas are biting my knees," I saw the little bishops of laughter consecrated by merriment. Their tiny bead-like teeth exploded through the room like popcorn. From the blackened table to the stool, from stool to earthen floor, down to the sandals tossed under the beds. More! More! Don't take the bear away once you have brought him here (their timid mouths would have said had they expressed themselves).

Out of one eye their mother watched the theater tumbling out of nowhere. Instead of cat-flaying excitement, or bear-flaying blood adventure, she noticed marching clouds reined in by the serenity in the children's dilated eyes. She continued sitting on her hatchet-hewed milking-stool, drinking her eternal cup of tea. I knew that the sun sets in her liver, that the years support her ramshackle heart with a wooden beam. I also knew that with her blackening dried-plum face, I would appear beneath frosty chandeliers at drink-nursing diplomatic feasts where, wrapped in lettuce, her prematurely-harvested breasts would also be served.

I will arrive at such dinners perhaps by plane, perhaps with iron-plated wings attached to my shoulders, perhaps on the back of a leaf drifting in through an open window, I, the spy for the poor, who is blessed with destroyer eyes and who sees everything. My ironed shirt will be the skin of those who have been sophisticatedly flayed,

my Golgothically ticking clock their pounding temples, after those of my father, my mother, and this sister as well, sitting before me, the orphan of a familiar but vanishing story, harboring no impassioned revenge, in tea steam breathing through her children's mouths and surviving through her children's flesh the tribute exacted from her womb.

1977

WRITER—STATE—NATION

The writer, even if his works—as those of Dostoyevsky and Faulkner—depict terrible crimes, can be led by one purpose only: to have the world, and the individual within it, be touched by the breath of freedom. Or: to touch with a sensation of similar intensity, allowing the reader to feel alive, fallible, mysterious, and a native citizen of the universe.

The state never seeks to achieve a similar purpose. Rather, it merely takes measures, regulates, encourages practicality, urges you to buy life insurance even in the event of your death. Its secret police, no matter how secretive, have nothing to do with metaphysical secrets, as contained, for instance, in a line of Rilke. On the contrary, if its interest so dictates, the state compels betrayals, sudden changes of mind and undetected surrenders of self. It arms and disarms. That it also affords protection? Of course. But only in accordance with elaborate contractual agreements.

It is no accident, then, that the state is generally thought of as realistic in outlook. A conservative and apprehensive conceiver, symbolized by the human body grown large, which clings to ossified and closed forms even after the spirit has long outgrown the form.

In saying this, I want only to emphasize that if literature is autonomous, it is more agile and contemporary than any state

Presented at the International PEN Congress, NYC, January 1986. Reprinted here from *The Portable Lower East Side* magazine, 1986.

structure. It continuously searches and constructs, it comes face-to-face with love and death; it broods, laments, tears down, and by and large distills victory from its losses. By virtue of stirring paradoxes, it extracts healthiness from disease. The crisis of state can be cathartic, but it is still profane, never becoming enduringly spiritual as that of one or another tragic hero. If Oedipus, upon learning the secret of his life, *only* surrenders, his life is merely an informative parable. But the blindly wandering king is immortal for all time. He comes and goes among us here, even in the enormous buildings of New York.

Should I continue listing the differences? I think it superfluous, just as comparisons between an elephant and a butterfly would be. Even the similarities between them would accentuate their distinctness. Let us cite that view of literary ethics which holds that the writer owes responsibility to no one other than his art, and that the writer is then a true writer only if he is completely merciless.

There is a kind of state structure—let us call it by its name: dictatorship—which professes a similar *ars poetica*. But imagine how incredibly great the difference is between the merciless writer and the merciless state. The former is harsh even with himself, while the latter behaves the same toward its subjects only.

That lane, or zone, in which literature and state—despite the essential differences between them—do come together in a phantom-like manner (that is, where they can come together) is in the realm of politics and culture. In the distant past, it was clear that the source of all creation, from the leather whip to a theory of politics, was culture. But, in the course of European history, first the church became separated from the state, and during later divisions, intellectual activity and the arts separated from modern states in the same way. At times one feels as if writers in the West today have brushed away even the memory of this one-time co-habitation from their consciousness. As if they had gained separation from the state, the power structure, in the same way as the independent judiciary, simply by declaring the vision of literature as sovereign and whole.

The situation of our writer-colleagues in Eastern and Central Europe is completely different. In these regions, literature is a very "personal concern" of the state. Most often posing a problem not only for the power of the state, but also for its psychological condition, almost to the level of producing a psychopathical

complex in the mind of the state. It fears literature, loves it and envies it, in the same way as the domineering man is jealous of his lover who seeks liberation. Put differently, just as we are not allowed a court system independent from the power of the state, there exists no literature separate from the state power and the political realm.

But does this mean that autonomous emotion, thought and ability to create are also nonexistent? Indeed, there are periods of time when they do not exist. After the Second World War, for example, the Socialist states nationalized not only the factories, not only the schools (the future), but also the peoples themselves. Their language, their imagination and even their past. Even the snowflake falling on lovers' hands. The poem by Gyula Illyés entitled *One Sentence on Tyranny,* a classic of world literature, is a single, great showdown with the age of the colonization of mind and soul. If the poem could have been published freely in 1951, when it was written, perhaps history would not have found it necessary to create an armed uprising in Hungary as the critique to the numbing Ice Age of Stalinism.

That I attribute such great significance to the role of literature in Central Europe? Yes, I do. Because for centuries it has been through literature that peoples living under conditions of semi-autonomy have been able to find their own autonomy and express their own self-image in the broadest, deepest and most radiant of strokes. And this is understandable. After all, poetry can penetrate deeper than any other form of human expression: down to the roots of national language, of national memory. And since thought is generally universal, but emotion is individual and unique, where I come from lyrical poets are not just exceptional, but at one and the same time blessed and cursed figures of community life.

But there is a more painful reason that literature in Hungary, as in other Central European countries, holds special significance. It is the split in personality which developed and gradually deepened between the state and the nation. To an American, the concepts of state and nation are interchangeable. He has never known the complex and explosive conflicts arising from the *three* notions of: state, nation and individual. Based on the model of spiritual-secular duality, he knew how to separate dualities only: state and individual, state and literature, and so on. But our circumstances are

different. Which is to say, the nation is a historical formation, while the state is only political. Although the country which has lost its independence seeks its role in the world as something called a state, the face beneath the mask bears the features of a nation. A writer knows perfectly well that the state can censure him, make him poor, or maybe even court him, but he will not confuse such acts with the gestures of the nation. To use a more impersonal expression: where I come from, the state is always a temporary frame, an economic and foreign policy unit. In contrast, the nation is historical and cultural. Small countries, too, must participate in the political and economic welfare of the Common Markets and the Warsaw Pact. But, in reality, each one participates only as a state. As an organization. As a body, but not as a soul. In the face of external constraints and realities, the nation represents internal independence. The trembling heartbeat of autonomy. A secret password hardly ever uttered. But I could also say: tradition, or: a sense of history. Let us recall Ortega. According to him, each nation is a different spirit. Nation in space is like age in time: the autonomous organism of feeling and thought patterns. Only in bad moments does this sense of differentness express itself in aggression or the ignorant conceit of exclusivity. For the most part, it presents itself in the diversity of cultural expression.

In his superb essay, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," published the world over, Milan Kundera writes that the identification card of a people is its national culture. And he immediately develops the thought further by saying that Central Europe is not a state, but a center of culture, or commonality of fate. But he speaks of it almost exclusively in the past tense. Not so much to present an illuminating analysis, but painfully, with the sorrow of a classical elegy. I could not argue with a single one of his thoughts. At most, I would turn my hopelessness-hardened hope to face his conviction. We are alive, we exist. And, although freedom has no alternative forms, only opposites, without national cultures no form of freedom is imaginable.

THE FEELING OF INFINITY

Indeed, why do I write? So far I have not learned, and I am afraid that I will never be able to give an exact answer to this question—not because my motives are muddled or obscure, rather, they are multifarious, contradictory, and they often even surprise me. Right now, for instance, I am wandering around my country cabin which has been disheveled by winter storms. I am looking at roof tiles swept down into the snow, the torn open roof, and the war comes to mind, the masses of rubble among which I grew up. But thinking about these symbolic stage props of bad luck here I don't mean to be bewailing losses. On the contrary: a familiar defiance begins to swell throughout my entire body. It is their losses that poets live from, and this benevolent recognition liberates me from the pressures of my situation. I now recall the summer snake that appeared in my garden last August, and after surveying the place and gliding about the trees only hid itself in the hollow of the old cherry tree when my girlfriend approached. It is this bashful, modern Biblical event that I would most like to write a poem about right now. Why this? And why now? Perhaps because of the contrast of the seasons? Who knows. But I can almost hear the swishing of dry grass under the snake's belly while birds soared over the garden with long yellow ribbons streaming down from their beaks to the ground. I feel that I see into heaven, into god's designs, and in that moment heat courses over me as if from the carnivalesque animation of summer. . . Perhaps one desires to write—surely, this must be it—because writing is nothing less than the feeling of infinity. Of infinity in all of its varieties. After all, joy is not real joy without a perspective, and death is not a real death if the whole world does not pass with it. When I write, I am free, freer than at any other time. "Life is a game lost in advance," many creative writers say, "but fortunately writing offers a little consolation or compensation in exchange." Such is an aching and wry wisdom, and while my brain is tempted to accept it, I have never felt writing to be a compensation. Whoever creates does not substitute, nor does he compensate anyone for anything. On the contrary: he gives

This essay was written in response to the question "Why do you write?" posed by the Paris daily, *Liberation*.

legitimacy to new conditions and fresh demands, to a new way of being that in every case arrests decay.

What I have just said in one breath is spoken through me by the Robinson Crusoe living most of the time in the thicket of poems. Poets, even when trying to be modest, only thrive on wholeness. Even when addressing themselves to the smallest detail, they are uttering their vision of the whole.

On the other hand, the writer of essays and prose, the other self of this Robinson Crusoe, his daytime self, his classifying self, is capable of giving much more lucid responses to the question: why do you write?

So, without further ado, let's get at the quick of this matter.

Here in Central Europe after the war, state-owned politics attempted to make almost everything a state property. Personality, language, imagination, the past, the future, smiles, even the forms of resistance. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, it did so brutally; later on, in a more refined and polite way, and while the process of state ownership has been indefatigable, it has, from time to time, made certain concessions to the individual. It has never liked the autonomous individual, however, because by their very nature such people are rebels. Through such individuals, politics has had to face its own side effects. So far, so good; yet those in power, in order to prove their own legitimacy, needed the token or shopwindow autonomy of a few values which could be exhibited to give an appearance of civil independence. Such "exhibits" were to be found in the areas of competitive sports and literature.

It is well known that over the past several hundred years, Hungarian history, apart from a number of revolutionary periods, has been politically conservative while literature—if I may be allowed to simplify a little—has been leftist. This opposition has remained a tradition even in years when artists were disestablished and dispossessed. Here is the origin of the paradoxical situation that is so flattering for Hungarian writers: the written word and the poet's restlessness possess honor, and politicians often appreciate in such values what they most severely ban. This distinguished situation and the position of literature requires not only a theoretical but a practical acting out of a role. In short, it is to literature that the compulsion to say the truth has generally been drawn. The press may lie, politicians may be clever and paint reality in new colors,

but literature immediately perishes if it talks beside the point. And truths do not simply withdraw into literature: they live a family life there and bear new truths. It is an ecstatic feeling when one becomes aware of a new idea in the course of writing and is able to put it in words.

Yet in *this* political and geological region, the writer is often compelled to write by human situations which he can only almost masochistically contemplate. I think of the plight of Hungarians who live as minorities, of the three million Hungarians living in Rumania and Czechoslovakia. Reality with all of its political and existential ties binds them to these states, while relative to their mother tongue and culture their allegiance is to the mother country, Hungary. Peace treaties drawn up after World War II secured all sorts of ostensible rights for them to be able to endure this schizoid way of life, but by now the successor states have abolished all such "ostensible rights." An example, symbolic of the whole fate of education in the mother tongue, is that while in Rumania Hungarians had a university and several colleges in 1958, after twenty years of desperate resistance they have lost not only all of these but also all but one of their many high schools.

How can a Hungarian write without feeling guilt and despair when he knows that on account of the language he writes in people are humiliated and sentenced to a quiet spiritual death? For a long time, Europe did not believe the stories about the Nazi gas chambers. In the same way, contemporary Europe does not believe the spiritual genocide of nationalities taking place in broad daylight, behind smiling faces and in shadow of political attitudes that it finds gallant.

My writing, then, beyond all ethical and esthetical driving forces, is also propelled by this despair, and by the hope that I can write sentences in Hungarian, my mother tongue, which will speak for those who have been paralyzed—by the hope that it will not again be only to the dead that we leave the inconceivable and terrible truths of life.

1981

GYULA KODOLANYI

Two Poems

THE SEA AND JOHN SMITH

"Though I be no scholar, I am past a schooleboy, and I desire but to know, what either you, and these here, doe know but that I have learned to tell you by the conttinuall hazard of my life."
—John Smith, *Letter to the Virginia Company*

". . .said it in prose like no one has since, simply that he had the *first* of it, had it not like even Columbus did, but as Columbus's navigator, say, only Smith *said* it, got it into words. . ."
—Charles Olson, *Captain John Smith*

I

poem concerning
how in March (after
seven months
for the first time I was wading
in shore sand
we were living a mile from
the harbor fat wild-geese-like
gulls
alit each morning on
the tar-paper roof of the neighboring shed
and the wind the wind unceasing
yet only after seven months
did I wade for the first time in shore sand
(my first shore
at the end of October

in Rhode Island was rocky more
like the Adriatic
or the southern English coast
here a suspension bridge too
a blinding white flash
yet still arched fishbone arching over
only the wind
the wind unceasing

but only after seven months
in March only in March
for the first time did I wade in shore sand
it was beyond Branford
six miles north
off route #95 we found at last a public beach
and with opened mouths waded
in blinding sand far apart
in the snapshot Ika and Clive step out at the same time
lean at the same angle
into the wind
along the breakers mouths opened
in ecstasy into the wind out
from winter's caul

II

were living a mile from the harbor
everything warehouses oil tanks ships
cargo ships cars #95 trucks cars
along the coastal outskirts solely private property
Trespassers will be shot (this in Virginia
those encroaching on private property will be shot
transgressors intruders the wind
the wind
unceasing yet only in March
for the first time on the Branford shore
my back to the land
could I at last think of John Smith he drew
the first map of this coast all the way north to Canada

(to present day Canada from Virginia
European waves cast him here spring's diastole
after he had completed his work in Transylvania he had broken in
fired a road a wedge into the Turkish expropriation
fences fencing off fencing around:
Smith an inherent/instinctive enemy not a *sworn* one,
  son of the wind
the wind *trespasser* transgressor
encroacher on privilege and warrior if need be
(among his possessions: a deed of nobility from Zsigmond Bathory
a coat of arms—including three Turkish heads—
  on a shield from Zsigmond Bathory
to Captain John Smith back home in England Smith
—not a Raleigh—was called a liar concerning Transylvania
America Zsigmond Bathory Indians
humane? a deed of nobility? Smith a common man
Smith an adventurer a lady's man deservedly despised
set adrift further and further out by the wind
                the wind
the trespasser the transgressor
cast here on the Branford shore
                (possibly on this very spot
  by European waves
by spring's diastole set adrift
(after leaving the colonists in Jamestown
having pacified and made friends with the Indians
and deservedly
  he was banned from Virginia thrown out
(in his absence of course by paperwork flunkies
this bizarre adventurer by gold-hungry businessmen
cast here
    from Europe further and further out
from Europe's caul by spring's wave
(the caul *should* tear if it is already drying out
if the seed within is ripe
cast here carried by the wind perhaps to this unnamed cape
to walk self-forgotten on the sand
while the others paddled around the promontory
sounding the depth with a plummet
testing for shoals and channels and the ship

out there at open sea
idly swaying

III

for beautiful women exotic lands The New World are
each perfect in themselves explorable
according to their own laws subjectable only by the self-subjecting
lovable each with a different map if
you allow them to guide you
to open and hide when you are enclosed in their ecstasy
you drift
on their waters (on your back
or sitting in a stern cutting a hole in the mirror with
the oar eddyless stroke to keep the wound from foaming
you drift on their waters
you coil through their forests around tree after tree
nod to their animals
they walk on in silent dignity
in their meadows you lie down
until, remembering yourself, jumping to your feet
you race back you crash through marsh-grass back
into yourself
to again be
asway in a boat
walking on the sand
in order to draw a map
at the edge of sky and water earth and sea
to remember the loving exploration
the maelstrom the ecstasy
the flight back into your caul
to remember it on the sand
John Smith alone

IV

the first European American
on this coast on the New England shore New *England*

this is how he named this coast despite all
(not judging his homeland after its "public" opinion
its businessmen paid hacks petty officials
asses shaped by political stalls
the first European American on this coast
exactly 31 years old on the Branford shore
in the wind
unceasing wind at the American English Central
European Asian intersection in the maelstrom of
the East and the West
John Smith
who is
English Hungarian Turkish (prisoner
a Tartar (sweetheart of an odalisk
Indian (Pocahontas's lover
a Virginian and most of all a New Englander
John Smith cast here
on the Branford cape (this unnamed cape
and stopped (the others far ahead
stopped
self-forgotten
in billowing inner peace
at the heart of the Atlantic maelstrom
at the intersection of worlds
at the pivot of memories
in a pivotal moment in the wind the unceasing wind
before he would go on along bordering shores and waves
in unceasing

V

wind we are running self-forgotten
across blinding sand
(a bit upland to the left
fallow winter's-end grass
along the breakers we were rushing choreographed
spring at full-tide winter ebbing in our dilating
arteries the diastole push our mouths ecstatic
rushing to the promontory's tip

halfway back drowned in aimless laughter
we stopped while our blood rushed on
wrapped up in ourselves
into the freeway's wind scent we drove back
nodding to the self-enrapt granite to unyielding memories
sea and wind on the portioned-out coast
auto route warehouse tank
cars warehouses truck factory
wilderness
only the granite
the sea and the wind remain as Smith knew them
and the name New England coined by him
Smith "hardly reliable"
a source and of course "not a great stylist"
say the scholars (the scolders
now that Virginia is already 370 years old
now that they too say again and again New England
for he who creates is suspect to
the one appointed to nose around
examine classify rate
from the back of a limousine from the cozy
throne of spectatorism from its barren
political stalling to fit asses
for they are trespassers yes they are the disturbers of
property
and peace rebels all the sea
and the ceaselessly unceasing wind

1979

TRACT ON RHYME

Eighty daisies. It must mean something that is exactly eighty and specifically daisies. The geo-chemical features of the area's soil. Aunt Rosy, yes, she would know. The colors of the flowers growing there depend upon it, that is, what can grow there is determined in advance. Grows, in halos. Feminine numinosity. One for whom images are only set in motion by end-rhymes must be tone-deaf. But it is possible that it is the inches per year of rainfall that carries the most weight. A team of scientists will have to perform a microscopic analysis. We took the daisies to her for her birthday. Others say that we received them from her.

The engineers of the mind, the machinists, are annoyed by additional trains, stunting pilots, and indeterminate daisies. *To measure what cannot be measured.* Pumpkins for bumpkins. Via this odd conjunction, a door opens onto childhood: the sweet smell of warm, steaming pumpkins, the row of orange scooped-out heads on the roof of the shed in the courtyard, in Nagyenyed, in the third head the openings for eyes and mouth are already beginning to grow. Poems with end-rhymes are like child rearing with face-smacks. Something has to thwack because it is impossible to confess emptiness, chaos has to be revenged. Uncle Axel in a two-seated Maxwell.

End-rhyme is not necessary when the whole sentence modulates according to an inner cadence. But such a dance should be almost imperceptible, "in music each redundant sound pains our ears." Yes, the building now houses the local Party Council. "What a bouquet!" Aunt Rosy laughed. We were crying. Why exactly eighty?

A plot of definite size must be divided by the area size each flower needs in order to grow, thinks the faltering layman, attempting to be scientific. Day's eyes, said Aunt Rosy. She loves the petals raying out. The extent of acidity and calcite. Anomaly? Pumpkins for bumpkins, he used to say, stressing the p/s, yet we all understood him. Understood what it meant to him. 16 Hungarian Street (no longer Hungarian Street).

When the sentence "is too musical, it draws attention away from the mental music to the outward music of sounds." Eighty daisies. There *are* rare conjunctions in which end-rhyme continues something, and does not thwack at the end of the line like minestrone

against the sides of a kettle. Rhyme-smiths: kettle menders? Eighty daisies. Without the "a/s" the whole thing would be worthless. Pumpkins for bumpkins: "for" is significant, but even without "for" the phrase is still significant. Pumpkins: bumpkins. It is impossible to invent such a phrase beforehand in an abstract way. The dance is all: the dance of sounds, of hands, of memories. Although they alliterate, there can be no mention of sixty or seventy daisies. Much less of eighty fleabanes. He loves me—he loves me not. With the fortieth "loves me not" we arrive at eighty, but there are not that many numinous, feminine petals on one stem. In other words, La Méthode is useless. Rhyme-menders: kettle smiths?

To reach the plaza one had to ascend the street that went by the College, and beyond the plaza the vineyards appeared: a bunch of grapes, lunch for apes. We obey the command of such rare conjunctions and we are enchanted by the charm of excessive music. In the prose poem the dance of sounds creates a more complex form: in it there is the gesture of human feet, of hands, of gazing eyes, the motion of memories and unthought thoughts. Of the incompatible and the ungraspable. Then lightning strikes and we say: *feminine numinosity.*

It swooped down under the Baja Bridge, my father said.

To make the measurable immeasurable.

1985

ENIKO BOLLOBAS

A Personal Report on the Present Situation of the Hungarian Writer, Géza Szöcs

I would like to draw your attention to the severe situation of a talented Hungarian writer in Rumania, Géza Szöcs, aged 32, who is suffering from the raging persecution of the Rumanian authorities.

This is a man who did nothing more than write. He wrote memoranda, petitions and proposals, and submitted them to the Madrid Conference, the Ottawa Human Rights Experts' Meeting and to the Central Committee of the Rumanian Communist Party. He addressed the Rumanian Communist Party several times because he did not consider his proposals either subversive or illegal. The rights he demanded had all been guaranteed under the Rumanian constitution. Szöcs engaged in the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression provided under the Helsinki Final Act, to which Rumania is a signatory. The object of his petitions was not only legitimate, but far from radical. All the items he requested were ones that had already existed after the introduction of Communism in Rumania, during the postwar regime of Prime Minister Petru Groza. The requested reforms would in no way threaten or inhibit the existing political, economic or social order in Rumania.

But Rumania is a country where only one nation, one culture, one church is tolerated: the Rumanian. Where Hungarian and German minorities are not permitted to maintain cultural institutions or any organizations which could defend their rights, either as individuals or as minorities.

There are *no* Hungarian schools in Rumania, whereas such schools had existed previously for centuries. There are only Hungarian classes, which can only be formed under the strictest of regulations, where the language of instruction in the sciences, history and geography is Rumanian.

There is no Hungarian university in Rumania. A bilingual institution, created in 1958 when the 150-year-old Hungarian

university of Kolozsvár was closed down, has suffered a radical decrease in Hungarian-language instruction in the humanities, and in subjects embodying the particular culture of national minorities. In 1985, a total of only 5 students were admitted to study Hungarian literature and to become teachers of Hungarian. This is the number allotted to 2.5 million Hungarians, the largest national minority in Europe. The only drama school to train Hungarian actors has also become bilingual.

All cultural relations between Rumania and Hungary, but especially between the Hungarian minority and Hungary, have been eliminated. There are no international cultural events in Rumania, nothing that would promote European cultural exchange.

Existing Hungarian and German television and radio broadcasts in Rumania were completely eliminated early this year. Public statues of Hungarian and German historical figures have all been demolished, and those that have been erected in their place are ones that portray figures whose sole function is to further the animosity between Rumanians and the minorities.

Rumania is a Communist country where only one church is tolerated: the Rumanian Orthodox Church. Among the many institutions of this national church we can find the flourishing monasteries of Moldavia. But no other denominations have been allowed to maintain their own monasteries. Rumania is a country where priests are beaten to death and Bibles are recycled into toilet paper.

Rumania is a country where censorship exists already in the dreams and thoughts of the writer: a pre-natal censorship, the abortion of thought before it can even come to life. And where this pre-natal censorship fails, and a thought *is* born, its bearer suffers the cruelest retaliation.

The persecution of Szöcs is nŏt only persistent, but expert, ingenious and determined. Up until October 15, he spent 8 to 10 hours a day in the interrogation room. He cannot use his typewriter, because as soon as he tries to, the police break in. All his manuscripts, his notes and personal letters are confiscated. His telephone is bugged, he does not receive *any* mail whatsoever. Whoever he talks to in the street must report the conversation to the police. He is denied his passport, and letters of invitation sent by French, German or Hungarian universities never arrive. He cannot

publish his works or pursue his career. In the streets he is followed, day and night, and his apartment is bugged. He lives in a social vacuum artificially created by the Rumanian authorities.

Allow me to quote a few passages from the letters he managed to send through dangerous channels. The final word should be his. These words reflect the horrific atmosphere in which a European writer must live in 1985:

"Don't ever be surprised if you hear someone quoting the exact words of our most intimate conversations—what we talked about in the car, in bed or out in the fields. I've heard such tapes; they've played them to me several times."

"I have seen photographs of us. For example, when we were stepping out of that old Lutheran church in X, remember? You look so beautiful in that picture, holding the ominous book they were after. Even the bookmark is clearly visible: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain.'"

"No dramatist can imagine such a situation: I am sitting in the interrogation room, under the spotlights, and because these bright lights are directed straight into my eyes, my tears keep falling—they are running down my face all the while, and in the meantime they read our letters to me. This crude voice coming from the darkness behind me, reading the lines dearest to me. . .I would once like to write all this down as dramatically as it really happened, but I don't think I'll be able to. At least, not for a long time."

"I am exhausted and need all my strength to finish this letter; they could break in at any moment. The candle is running out (and, you know, especially around All Saints' Day, you cannot buy candles in town), my fingers are trembling, and I cannot see—spending each day under bright lights and fists, each night in candlelight. And this is my last candle."

1985

GEZA SZOCS

Commentary on an Old Review

(Billboard-poetry: ambiguous, harsh, journalistic):
Arpád Visky gravediggers, have you called a conference,
a production seminar,
have you called a brief meeting, a meeting? what was it like,
was it successful?
who's the head gravedigger?
Hey sutler wenches, what's going on?
have you heard that Arpi died?
friends everywhere tomorrow!
Or will there be any?! who knows!
is anyone mourning? who are the mourners?
gravediggers! are we on schedule?
is anyone still unburied?
Goddamn it, shovelers!
you must increase production!

•

September 6, 1980, Saturday night, 7:30.[1] *As I entered the foyer of the Hungarian Theater, there between two pillars, in a glass cage with wooden bars, with absolute authenticity, was Visky Arpád. He was moving about, pacing back and forth, pathetically, lit up by a spotlight like an insect, scratching at the glass with such silent helplessness that the audience clustering about him in a big circle could not really enjoy what they were seeing. ALL THIS IS LIKE AN ACCIDENT ON THE STREET, someone next to me said, and it really was like an accident. Yes, for stage events take us by surprise in a different way than real life events, and is this case the spectacle was especially powerful because it allowed one to forget that he was in a theater. Yes: Tompa, the Director, and Visky, managed—and this is the utmost—to communicate to the audience in such a way that they forgot that what they were seeing was theater.*

•

Do not think that we forgot you.[2]
Once, we nearly opened our mouths to speak out—
but, well, there were so many excused absences.

Gum mushrooms,
especially mushrooms on the gums,
and mouth bloat,
diphtheria
and uvulitis, and heart obesity:

so you see, with such sicknesses, it is very difficult.
But tell us, Arpád Visky,
what play did you put on for your jailers?[3]
Did they get your political skits?
what *is* the Danube-delta like in winter?
(Billboard-poetry, indeed!) just how happy
would you say a delta labor camp is?
What did you put on for the prisoners, your fellow prisoners

and for the mice laborers and for the birds in the reeds?
ARPAD VISKY, TO WHOM DO YOU PLAY IN THE GRAVE?
who is your audience: deadolescents? or the earth spirit, the geo-demon?
is it your voice I now hear?—"I am playing Tatrangi"—

are you playing[4] Tatrangi at the moment he touches down?
the way your favorite hero, David Tatrangi, when he lands,
has his hand on the direction stick,
standing in his flying machine with flapping wings,
the way he lands Home
in Jókai's *Utopia*,[5]
most certainly this is your role in the earth.

•

Good news!
the Hungarians have won the world cup in tiddly-winks.
His Holiness the Pope prayed for us.

Light is thrown upon mysterious forces all the time. A noose hangs
between the laws.
Possibly, the missing 80% of the universe has been recovered.
The Fifth Reciprocal Effect has been discovered:
but all this is of no use to you, Arpád Visky.
And I feel this poem isn't good enough.

Let's do it rabbit eye fashion,
boiled lobster fashion,
si nu mai scrium poezii bune,
and we do not yet good poetry write,
and no force or Reciprocal Effect has untied
the noose around your neck

staring each other out in a blood-smeared obituary:
the suffering
and the reckoning.

•

Arpád Visky is one of our most talented actors, but this time, in the role of Woyzeck, this man whose personality has been smacked and kicked out of him, this miserable person who has been driven mad, perhaps because he was in bad form? was he oppressed by some dark presentiment in connection with this role? anyway: that night except for a few outstanding moments, he was unable to perform brilliantly, the way he usually does.

Still, as I wrote in my review six years ago:

From now on, whenever I pass through the foyer of the theater, I will always think of Visky as a monument of defenselessness and helplessness, and he will be more vividly present for me than those stone statues of theatrical notables exhibited there that we seldom notice.

•

The Fifth Force, the Black Reciprocal Effect

lurks behind gravity,
with two hands, with a yellow bandanna, it helps fruit to drop,
it leans out of the windows of the free fall,
adjusts the pillow under Visky's head.

> Rope, freedom and handicraft
> and acting and law all blend.
> A nigger is sleeping in the cotton-field
> and he who passes by, bows his head.

NOTES

[1] In the late 1970s/early 1980s, I worked as a non-party-member independent journalist for one of the "ruling" party's newspapers, *The Truth*, published in Kolozsvár, Rumania. The *italicized* parts of this text are word-for-word quotations from the review of a play in the September 9, 1980 edition of *The Truth*, which I wrote about the Woyzeck performance by the Sepsiszentgyörgy Company in Kolozsvár, directed by Tompa.

[2] (From a letter written to Arpád Visky, November 1984): Last August I wrote an article on the plays Tompa has directed, at the request of the *Het Weekly*, and in it, when writing about Woyzeck, I remembered you in print. The Assistant Editorial Director phoned me immediately: they would publish my article, BUT OBVIOUSLY WITHOUT ANY REFERENCE TO VISKY—and, he added: I PRESUME YOU WERE JOKING. This was already six months after your arrest. Since I was not joking, I could not agree to the publication of the article. A few days later, I heard that this Assistant Editorial Director remembered our conversation in these words: had they agreed to publish the article as I wrote it, the following day the three main editors would have been dismissed. "Perhaps it is all the same to Szöcs, but certainly not to us," this otherwise fine and good-intentioned Assistant Editorial Director added, who, strange as it may seem, along with his boss, was fired a few weeks later in spite of all this watchfulness and caution. Well, in that case, they might as well have published the article mentioning you, I might add now—if one is going to get fired regardless, it is all the same, no? Of course, if this article does get published, everyone will be certain that it has something to do with the firing of the editors, and I will be the scapegoat! "That man only brings trouble."

Something else: through Andris Visky, I contacted some Transylvanian actors now living in Hungary, with a request that they select some poems for a public reading,

or set up some other kind of performance, and turn the proceeds over to you, not mainly for the money, but as a public show of solidarity.

Months later, the answer came and it was this: why us?

[3] (Excerpts from some broodings)
For example, the poet can write for his desk drawer, as well as the composer, and even a painter who has been locked out of society can be duly appreciated by future generations. But what hope is there for an actor, locked up in a prison cell, exiled from his stage?

[4] (From a letter to Visky, November 1984): Thus I don't have time right now to turn Mór Jókai's novel into a play, but I promise to do so in a few months. The question is, of course: where could it be performed? And could you be invited to play the leading role? As I see it, no theater here would touch it.

[5] Re. this Utopia: according to Jókai's prophecy, as he put it in *The Novel of the Future*, in the 1960s there will be formed a utopian state in the Danube-delta under the leadership of David Tatrangi, which will be a republic of plenty, liberty, and equality. "He who travels toward the Black Sea along the river, when leaving Tulcsa, traveling on the Szulina fork on his own electric boat, will see on both banks permanent garden cities. . .he will see an infinite line of mansions. . . and magnificent hotels along the promenades. . .There is no prison in this Utopia . . .In this Utopia no one's life or freedom are endangered."

EPILOGUE

Arpád Visky was a man dissatisfied with himself. In the autumn of 1982, this is how I expressed his self-critical, self-ironical stance:

> When I was a child (he muses for a long time)
> I was exchanged (by mistake). I was exchanged
> (he twists his palms outward) for a poor and pit-
> iable gypsy kid, and I often (he becomes sad) think
> about this: that the poor, real Arpi Visky shivers
> in a gypsy tent in the rain and cold somewhere
> while all this time (he gets angry) ***this*** fucking
> gypsy kid (pounding his chest) lives like a king
> and (he tosses down a shot) drinks and—(hand wave
> of resignation)

1986

JOHN YAU

The Drawings of Lydia Dona and Lawre Stone

For the generation of abstract painters who began exhibiting in America in the late '50s and '60s, the fabrication of a literal surface and the elision of subject matter were the approved goals. If you could achieve an empirical space (or literal surface) that could be equated with a grand theme, you were carrying the torch held by such pioneers of abstraction as Kasimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, and Barnett Newman. In order to be taken seriously by the art world (curators, collectors, dealers and critics), the painter had to accept various proscriptions regarding his or her approach. If the painter decided to either reject or step outside of consensus opinion, then the art world's response was either scorn or neglect.

One of the obvious ways the situation has changed in the '80s is due to the new status of collectors and dealers. Through publications such as catalogues, the attention of the mass media, and other propaganda factors, various collectors have been able to elevate their collections to museum status. As arbiters of culture, they are able to influence other museums and magazines. Whereas dominant culture (the art world's version) was once defined by an oligarchy, now it seems to be made up of dictators and their kingdoms.

Beneath this more visible change is another less visible though more important one. It is quite apparent that younger artists such as Lydia Dona and Lawre Stone have rejected a linear, formally biased reading of history. Although the notion of aristocratic lineage is not dead (witness the theoretically correct postmodern stances taken by Peter Halley and Sherrie Levine), it does not seem to have quite the grip it once did. The clearest sign of the growing rift between the generation of younger abstract artists (Bill Jensen, Gregory Amenoff, Lydia Dona, and Lawre Stone, for example) and the older established one (Robert Ryman, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella, say) revolves around their relationships to official history. In the last few years, it has become quite apparent that a

number of younger artists are reexamining history in order to discover their own authenticity. Certainly, the influence of early American Modernists, such as Arthur Dove and Marsden Hartley, has not always been positive. Other young artists, however, have decided to look elsewhere.

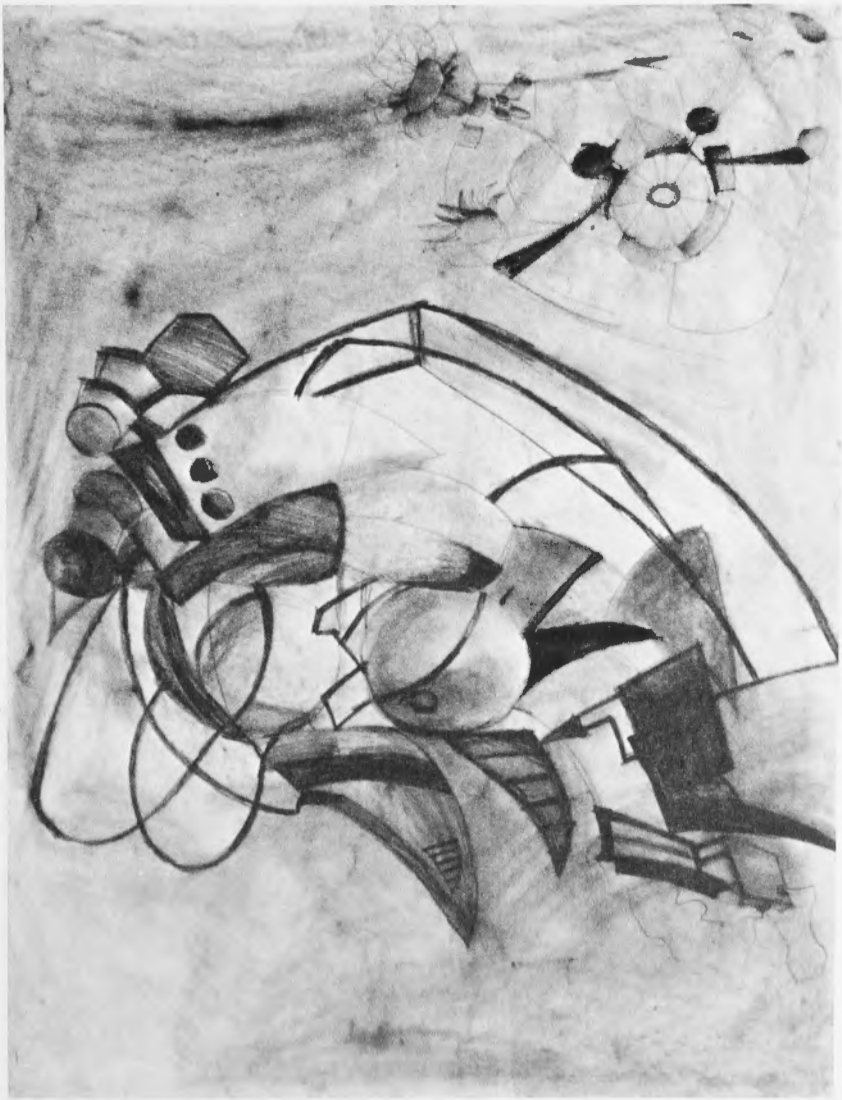
Space: the word itself conjures up all sorts of associations. Lydia Dona and Lawre Stone can be said to explore all the meanings and associations inherent in the word. In her work from 1985-86, Dona explored a spatiality that bears comparison with the work of Roberto Matta and Yves Tanguy. Her images suggested crystal formations, as well as space station debris. In 1987, the artist began exploring the possibilities of all-over compositions. In the recent paintings, Dona layers shapes and patterns over and within a depthless, lightfilled space. She is capable of making the picture plane seem as if it is bending, rippling, or falling away. Some areas feel solid, while others are optical. The shapes and patterns allude to computers, as well as electrocardiograms. The viewer feels as if he or she is floating or falling.

Lawre Stone derives her images from technical books and science manuals. She transforms Cezanne's cones and spheres into receptacles barnacled with history. While the images are signs for order and connectedness, her placement of them is disruptive. Systems abut and overlap without adding up to something whole. This is not to suggest her drawings depict chaos, because they don't. Embedded within their seeming randomness is a sense of order, which we never quite seem to grasp.

Jackson Pollock began pouring paint shortly after the end of World War II, and the release of two atom bombs onto Japan. Lydia Dona and Lawre Stone make their work in the '80s, after images of the space program were imprinted in their minds. If Barnett Newman's singular achievement is the emptying out of space, as formalist critics suggest, then Dona and Stone address the way space (science fiction and scientific fact) has been filled. Whether as abstract artists or as ecologists, we have to deal with our history, its debris.

LYDIA DONA

Four Drawings



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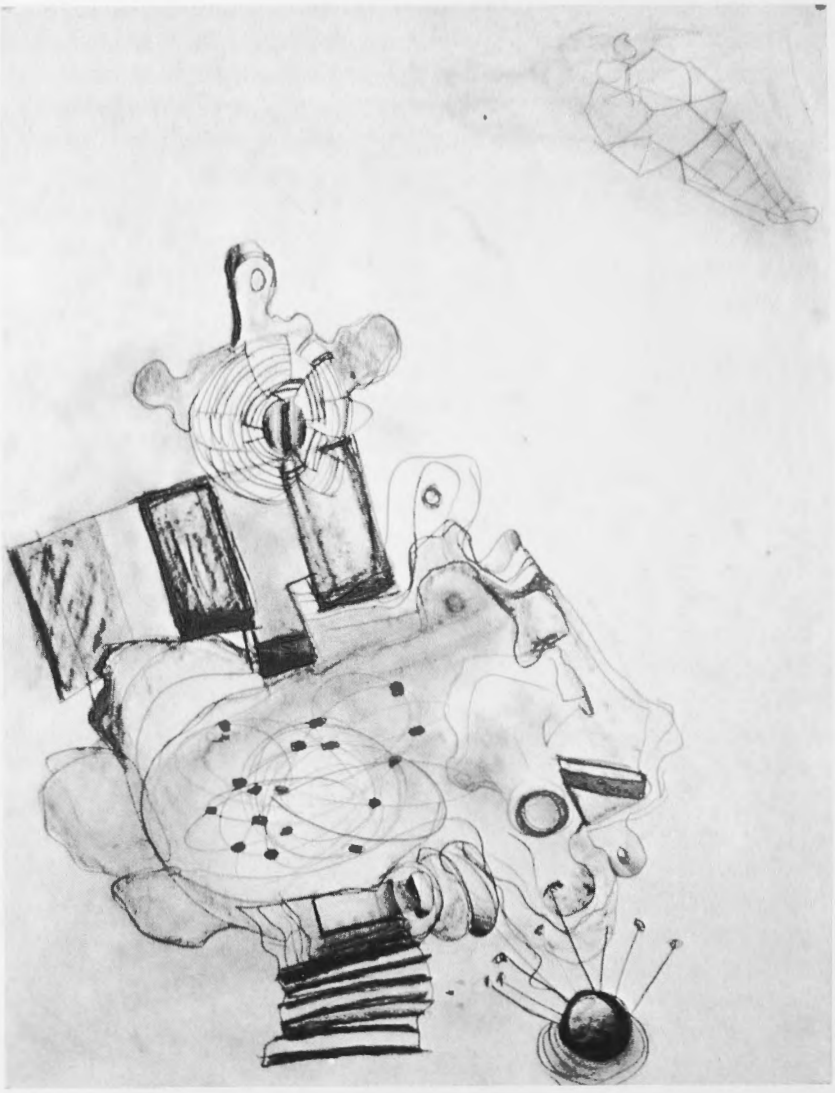
graphite on paper, 50 x 38"



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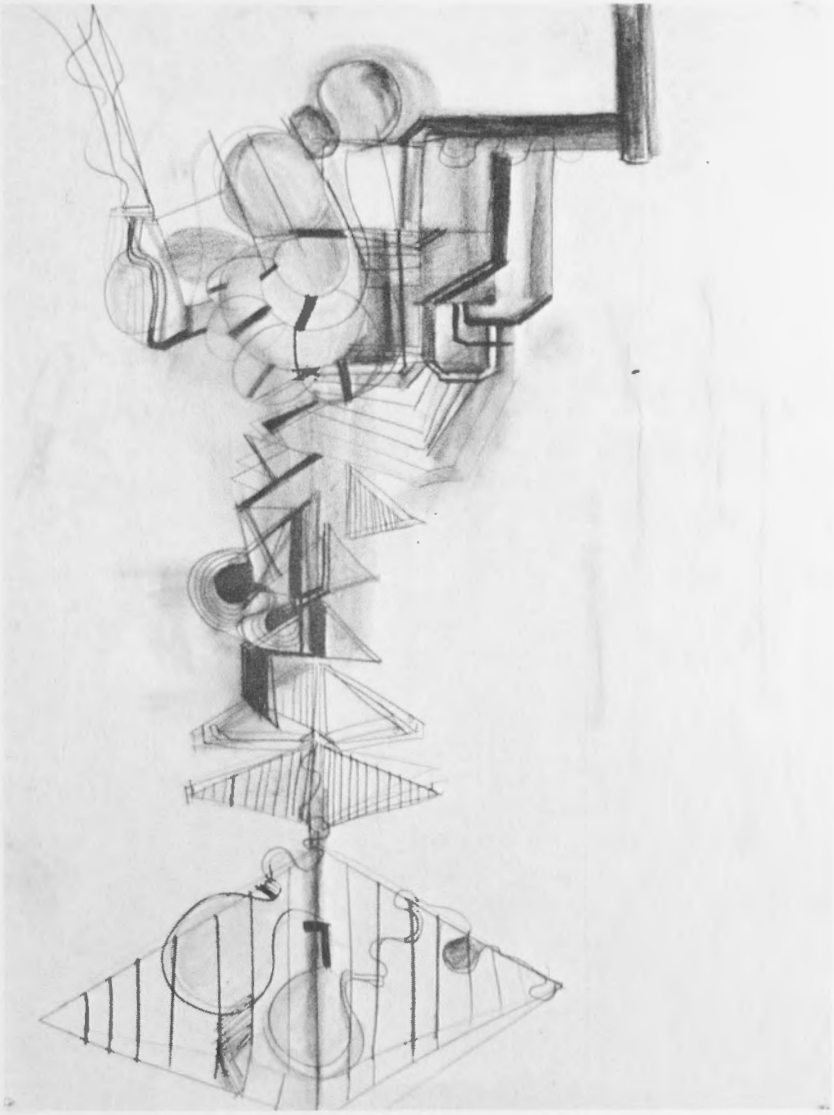

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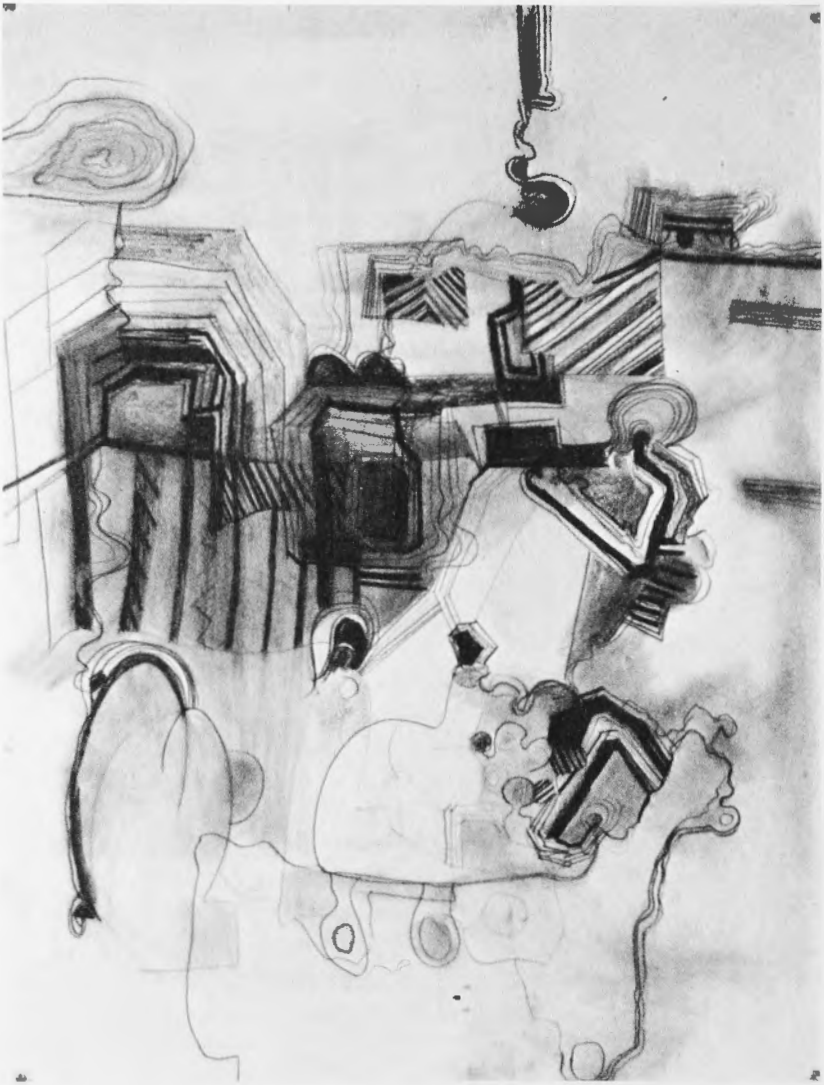
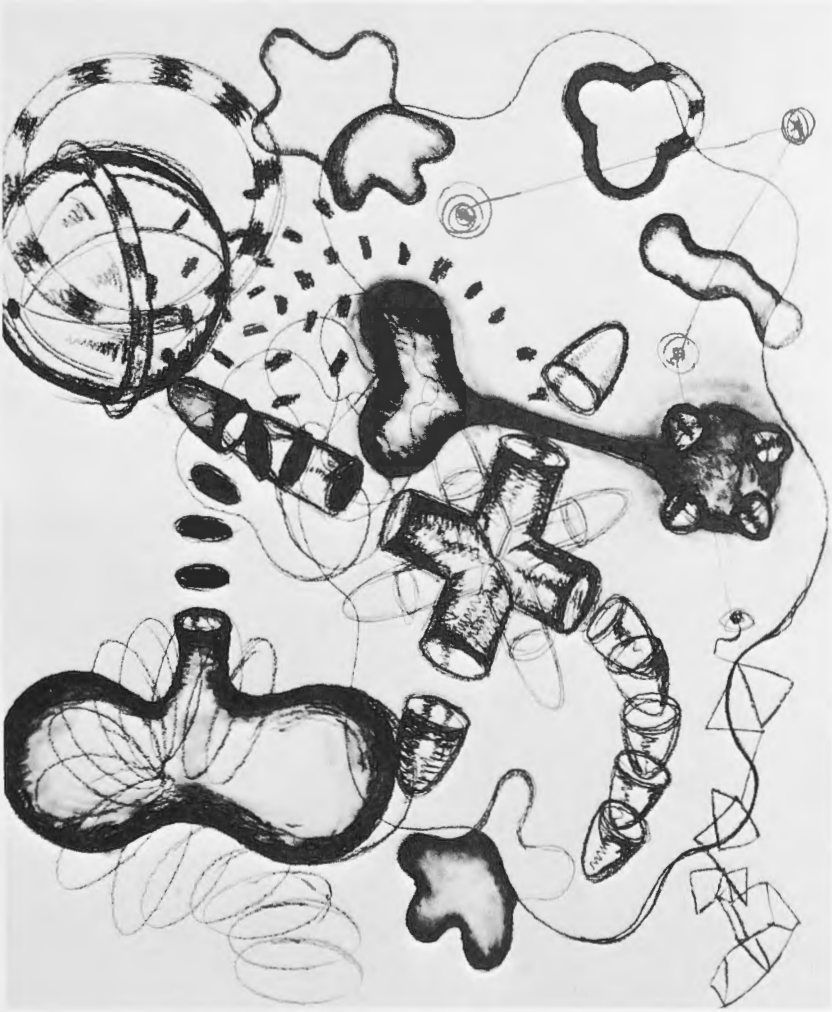
graphite on paper, 50 x 38"



UNTITLED, 1986
graphite on paper, 50 x 38"

LAWRE STONE

Four Drawings



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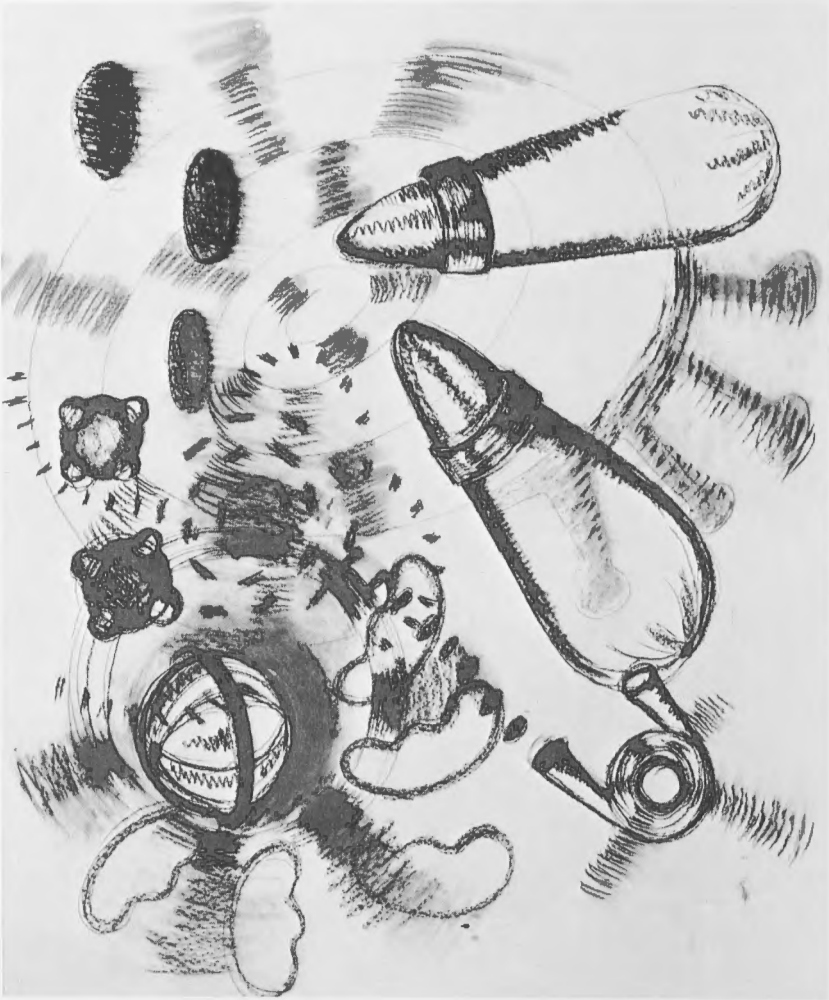

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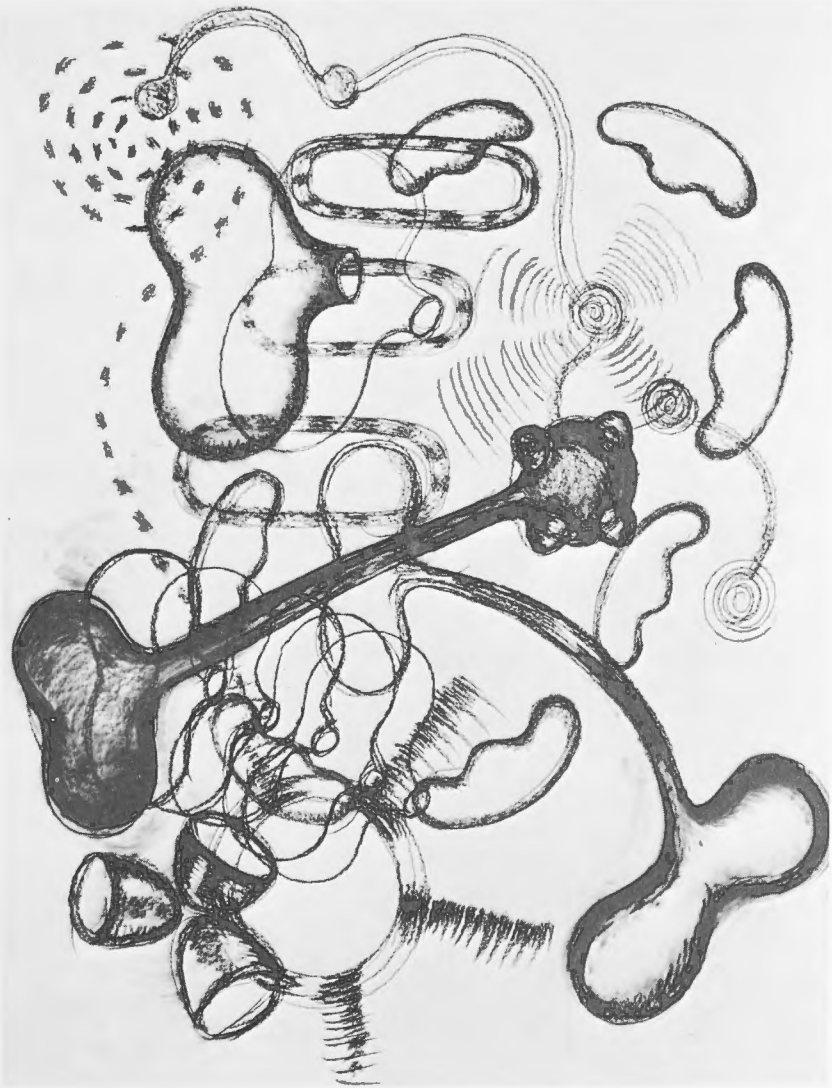

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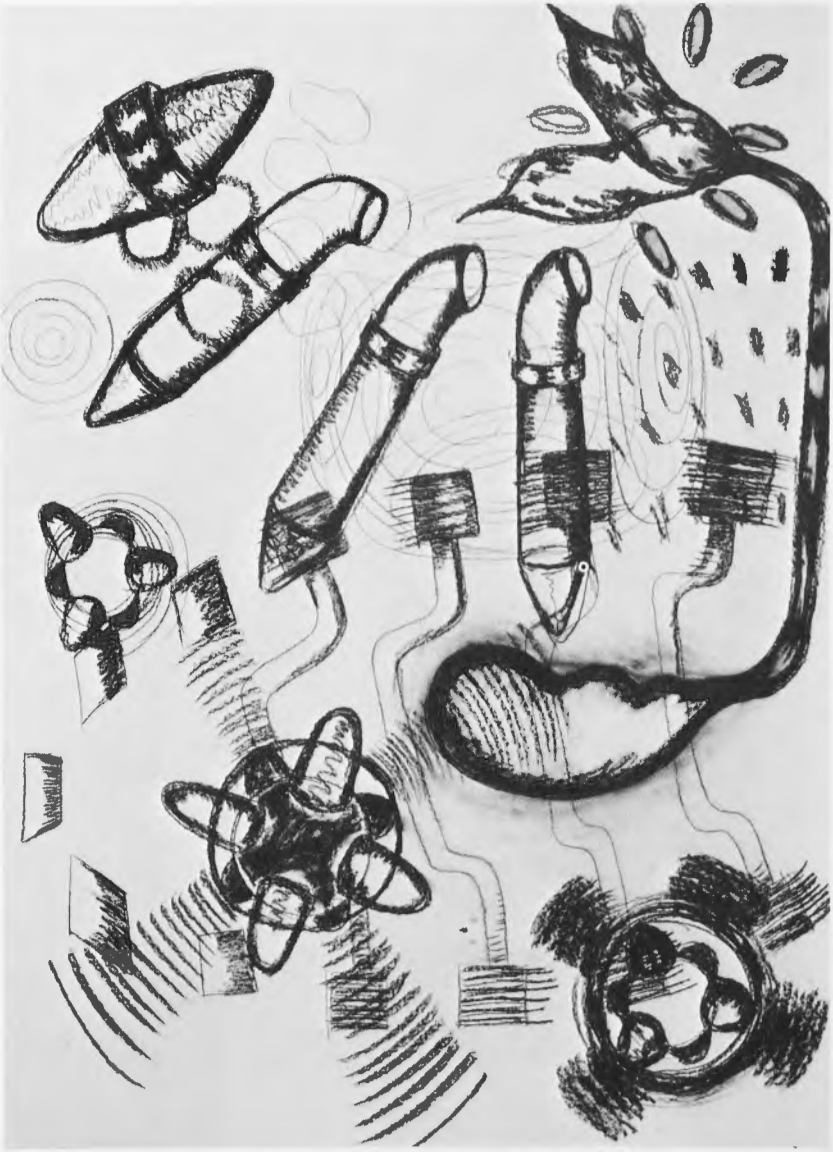

UNTITLED
60 x 48"

MARJORIE WELISH

Three Poems

PUBLICLY SILENT

Events do not imply they are sealed off from each other:
you move so rapidly through awareness
and the self-awareness drizzling over it.

We hold onto each other, a bird and its beak,
but awareness brings us to the intersection
of perishable paper

and quietly strolls our eyes along the cut
as it makes of our bodies two
celestial phenomena: desire and knowledge

telling of many cuts in situ
until aware of our eyes in situ, although halved,
to draw our injury along the cut

and make of our one body, two,
and exact of our two repossessed bodies, a rent
which falls from rock to rock to rock.

TWO LINES FROM REDON

Because incompleteness is somehow its real form,
a spirit,
an innovative mist
will harbor effect of cause, the ether of cause
or effect, but not both.

The effect of a hidden cause,
or what the gypsy knew
in sinews fatigued, but fatigued
by some glorious, invisible agency
or van

meets us, like some ever-esteemed adversary.
Across a field, the only life ever lived
in pleasure
attains the stature of a rival.
But ends are not known

in advance of actions; only in retrospect
a falling leaf is whispered.
The wheels will pale
in allied but different
fragments and fragrances.

BLOOD OR COLOR

Across a room,
a handshake in a late, large design
has caught the overflow of the heart, the human figure as a
source.
"Have you sent me my bouquet of gladiolas?" the poet asks.
"No, I haven't," I say, "but I have emphasized it."

Across a room, a writer queries,
"Have you reached my claim check and my watercolors, have
you introduced
a bouquet of gladiolas?"
"No," I say, compressed in ambiguous space,
"but I have brought you your bouquet of gladiators."

"No," I say,
"but as in the arena of this room,
interrogation is impaled on intimacy: gladiators burst
and metamorphose into the womanly bright remains of our
city."

This pediment forfeits nothing; these gladiolas are
inextinguishable.
The most brilliant blue eyes obtained by natural means
flare as if in a greeting, herd or flock.
A herd or flock is numerically great.
Is this my gift: the human figure pierced and confessed?
But the sky had altered:

Pierced and splashed, and driven
like the arena of command
drives the volume, line and light
of rooms we enter,

here is a man, some victory;
some victory, though not all of it,
some victory with outstretched arm
like Alexander,

the marble face
with hurtful tools at the deepest level.
"They are afraid of you.
That's why they are so obsequious."

GERALD BURNS

The Myth of Accidence, Book VII

Artemis it is, with bow and greyhound coursing along, the cast yellow
so, she is blonde or reddish, the strap for quiver bejeweled (adjustable?) at scapula
the dog with a collar. She has a crescent floating on her hair.
Verbs are curbs. That which, loving, descends where "no birds sing"
experiences gelatinization of the verb, frozen Tanais
ig-mobile. "Consider," I once said to a psychologist, "the Eskimo"
as Lucretius might raise tribes with eyes in breastbone
a cure for myopia the looking through fine-sawn bone lattice.
These trees, dark so the figure can be light, are in the branch an oakleaf
cluster, what the Antipodes saw (like a tie worn upside down, Alouettes)
the Choice of Hercules or Paris stochastic as a fork.
Tissier in Old Bond Street has an oval garnet pendant (large, cabochon)
enameled red and green with diamonded oval hanging from it ending with three gold balls
—the mate to it in Johnson Walker & Tolhurst, Burlington Arcade
a bit more worn, minus the case and chain but identical, mock-Tudor.
Inns showing the magic jug, rustic fingerpad on the deermouthed airhole whorled.
Mat weights (miscalled sleeve-weights) call up wind-infested houses
may be, Jane Whittaker's antique pennycandy weights in Mile End, matched
London Museum set (also brass), lion weights in the BM (the Asshurnasirpal frieze

lions upstairs ungonaded and run to the king in cages with a
raise-up door so like Mike and Missy's
circus ones, there.
Ducks in the canal behind COM/Energy, and a softball-sized ball
any old trash, beamed at by Williams, became beamed-at trash
BEING, collaborating in romanticizable durée
as language spits, solder with flux at the core dribbling tree
gum.
She circles warily around a herm, with her dog, as if Elizabeth
left Dudley one of her naked, whiffing a perfumed Goa ball
and that association, jewel-encrusted, lasted.
Upstairs in a room no one can find Dee, aged beyond compute
talks to himself, the stars, angels, his equipment like Turner's
record-book
reduced to its binding to carry watercolor cakes half dissolved to
natural shapes.
Gods are always a problem and it is probably best to render
them
like Tiepolo's thrown up through the ceiling, looking down at
you
like the memory of the Renaissance, perspectival because earthy
the way a vein of sand will stain your hand yellow as turmeric.
I think of hearts, fatty tissue and clinging veins rendered in
porcelain,
the Indians who liked removing them with obsidian
having provided Dr. Dee with a circular flat one (cylinder in
section), good platform
for such a heart, exhibiting even the colors as colors though
reflected in black. Break 'em and a clean white line would
interrupt the glaze.
Write on parchment dusted on the underside with talcum on the
stone, lift,
read, erase.
We blur what we touch sometimes, just by living as long as we
do—
our moist interior surrounded by a drying avocado
or prow like a ball mace with Punch's mouth coming at you out
of mist
the intimations of wan life in the pages of *Phantastes,* spirit
smoked

in iodine vapor, bromine, businesscard propped over the crystal
Misses Stein and Toklas jolie, even Arp essaying printed wicker.
Arraigneth as the spider texturizing in low fields becomes
Riemannian
funnels and curves the dew a dust catastrophizes for us
shape for its own sake Klein or Euler would applaud in the
morning
a thing bending gracefully around what's there for purposes of
its own.
"The eare is a rational sence, and a chiefe iudge of proportion,
but in our kind of riming what proportion
is there kept, where there remaines such a confusd inequalitie
of sillables?"—Campion.
His heard what he *knew,* weight as lead shot in a capsule flips,
up
inertiality of meaning imposed on the ideal pattern, Q.E.D.
It's awkward, hearing a life in a sentence lace from a wrist might
ape
(cuffs now turning over sleeves again, Pepys notes on attire) the
sumptuary
laws Cromwell established not unlike those instituted by
Charles II.
Cupido in Louis XIV fountain statuary devolves to inexplicably
fat baby
the gold on the "comet" (star with multiple-arced tail) above the
globe in armillary sphere atop Busch-Reisinger, now all
scaffolding, faded,
museum now shut.
Tsunami, nefesh, what would Larkin say to other tongues
announcing contexts
men leaping across long fields, ambulances, Mr. Bleaney and
chiffon weddings
poems in a book. Checkbook entries looked at would be poetry
in Arcady, each shepherdess (still thinking of the lace dipped
and fired)
with a heartshaped ruby at her porcelain throat. Dressing them
is like furnishing a doll room,
billiard table no larger than a playing card, balls smaller than
peas, velvet felt.

There is chagrin in the presence of the orchestrated small.
Searcy says it is easy to imagine an ant so small that it has no
inner workings, and John Dee thinks the point may have begun
creation.
Reprieving the obsolete prolixity of shade, umbrage may be
taken to spread (that
is to say extend) a darker lawn like oil in gobbed smears, Tissot
flowerpots luminous
from taking finer strokes to make the lawn at all, young woman
with croquet mallet
exhibiting her estate. They work, in their straw hats, against a
time line.
Most activities are sideways from the need of defending,
hemisphere
is grass never to roll (miracle) into the flowerpot on its side.
In any case a Morisot of occupied lawn all sloshed in does for
how "lush"
suits summer grass in experience and more importantly memory,
gowned people record.
Complexions attach themselves to seasons as Helga loden-caped
in boots
accompanies her tree and Hogarth's Shrimp Girl enjoys day
yellow
as projector's bulb (the picture cooler gray and pink) age
tinting bare canvas.

WOLFGANG GIEGERICH

Deliverance from the Stream of Events: Okeanos and the Circulation of the Blood

In his book *H_2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness,* Ivan Illich discusses the history of the imagination of water as stuff. Water has not always been H_2O, as we might assume being used to our scientific thinking. That it came to be H_2O, after once having been mythical water, has a long history.

An essential element of this history is, according to Illich, the invention of the circulation of blood by William Harvey (1628). For it was blood which for the first time gave rise to the idea that a stuff circulates within itself, an idea which in the long run became essential also for city planning. As Illich shows, the idea that we now take for granted, that water, just as it is piped into the city, must leave the city by its sewers is very modern. I quote a longer passage from Illich's text:

> The modern idea of a 'stuff' that follows its destined path, streaming forever back to its source, was still foreign to Renaissance thought. The concept of 'circulation' and not only its embodiment in the blood represents a profound break with the past. The newness of the idea of circulation is perhaps as crucial for the transformation of the imagination as was Kepler's decision to replace the translucent spheres carrying a luminous planet (in which Copernicus still believed) with the new elliptical orbits traveled by rocky globes. Circulation is as new and as fundamental an idea as gravitation, preservation of energy, evolution, or sexuality. But neither the radical newness of the idea of circulating 'stuff' nor its impact on the constitution of modern space has been studied with the same attention that was given to Kepler's laws or to the ideas of Newton, Helmholtz, Darwin, or Freud.

Bodies had always been able to *circle* around a center. The abstract concept of circular motion had lent itself to influential metaphors. The presence of the center 'altogether at once' at each point of its circle's periphery had been a symbol for God, soul, and eternity. Time too was thought by many schools to pass in circles. The phoenix was the symbol of renewal by fire; Plato described cyclical renewal as a periodic flood. Souls were able to be born and reborn again. But the connection between 'waters' and what we call circulation had not been made. Before Harvey the 'circulation' of a liquid meant what we call 'evaporation': the separation of a 'spirit' from a 'water', for instance the distillation of liquor from wine, or the process of 'spiritualization' by which blood was assumed to pass through the septum (we now consider impenetrable) from the left to the right of the brain. The idea of a material that flows forever back to its own source constitutes a major innovation in the perception of water, a transubstantiation of its 'stuff.'

The first liquid to which 'circulation' was ascribed was the blood. . .[1]

The radical change in the imagination with the beginning of the modern age emphasized by Illich cannot be underscored too much. This change indeed has the character of revolution. It means an ontological transformation: a change of man and his world in their *Being*. It is not merely a shift in scientific theories: the world itself and we along with it have truly become different through this seemingly only intellectual revolution.

But as regards the invention of the circulation of blood by Harvey in the 17th century, it seems to me that the radical newness is not exactly where Illich is placing it. It is not really completely new that a stuff, and water at that, circulates in itself and returns to its source. Therefore the undisputed revolutionary novelty of the discovery of the circulation of blood seems to me to be of a different nature.

For the idea of a stream of water circulating within itself and returning to its beginning belongs to the oldest, universal stock of mythical imaginings. It is the idea of an ocean completely surrounding the flat disc of the earth: Okeanos. Okeanos originally was not a sea proper, but a river, and accordingly masculine and referred to

as "Father Okeanos" in contrast to the depth-psychological equation of sea = the unconscious = mother. He is called by Homer "the origin of the Gods", "the generation of all" because with his inexhaustible procreative power he had begotten everything with Tethys, the "mother", the receptive primal water goddess.[2] Similarly, the Egyptian primal ocean Nun, who as "World Encircler" surrounded the earth, was termed "Father of the Gods".[3] There even is an extant early pictorial representation of the primal stream surrounding the earth. A New-Babylonian map of the earth from the early 6th century B.C., which however dates back to an original from the 8th or 9th century B.C. and is presumably the oldest map of the world at large, shows the primal ocean, here called "Bitter River", flowing around the circular disc of the earth.[4]

Kerényi says of the Greek primal ocean, "However, Okeanos was not an ordinary river god, since his stream was not an ordinary stream. Even after everything originated from him, he still flows *in a circle* at the outermost edge of the world, *streaming back into himself.* The rivers, springs and wells, the entire sea, they all continuously originate from his wide, strong stream. When the world was already under the rule of Zeus, he alone was allowed to remain in his old place, which actually was no place, but mere streaming, border and separation from the beyond,"[5] just as according to Hornung the Egyptian Nun is the "world-encompassing border between world and non-world, between Being and Non-Being."[6] Okeanos is pure "circular streaming."[7]

Even in Plato, that is to say outside the ancient mythological world, we find, in a philosophical myth describing the structure of the world and underworld, the following statement about the rivers: "Indeed, there are some that move in circles, wind themselves around the earth one or several times like serpents and then. . . pour back again. . . . Thus there are quite a few. . . streams. . .of which the largest and the one flowing all around as the outermost is so-called Okeanos."[8]

Here we have in all clarity the conception of a water continuously streaming back into its source, in unending circulation. Even the etymological meaning of the word Okeanos, derived from Semitic, is supposed to be "circling".[9] Thus the application of the idea of circulation to a liquid stuff cannot be what is novel about Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood and what brought

about an ontological change in modern man and his world. Harvey's discovery indeed follows a very old mythical conception, an archetypal idea, and is with respect to its content and form downright conventional.

What nevertheless makes Harvey's invention undoubtedly revolutionary must be something else. What this is becomes apparent if we compare the two ideas: on the one hand the idea of a world stream, enclosing the outermost edge of the earth is the border between Being and Non-Being, world and non-world, everything that is and happens—on the other hand a river circulating *in* man. This contrast must be supplemented by the complementary facts that at the time when Okeanos encompassed the earth, there didn't exist a circulating (blood-) stream in man, and that at that time when the circulation of the blood was discovered, Okeanos no longer flowed around the circular earth. The earth had by that time long turned into a globe, and with the expeditions of Columbus (1492), Vasco da Gama (1498) and Magellan (who first sailed *around* the world, 1519-1522), the river encircling, and marking the border of the earth disc had been breached, so that the idea of an Okeanos had psychologically become obsolete. The breach through the enclosure into the open, into the infinite, had been sealed. Once and for all Okeanos was reduced to a mere ocean, which, even though immense, would no longer separate world and non-world. At its other bank one is no longer in danger of falling into nothingness; to the contrary, other continents just like the familiar ones open there before us, the "New World" (i.e. still truly "world"!) in contrast to what only then began to be termed the "old world". And even beyond the earth there is no nought, but the vastness of an infinite number of additional worlds.

The almost literally world-shaking quality of this change becomes evident through this comparison: what psychologically or imaginally happened through the discovery of the circulation of blood (or what is reflected in it) is the transposition of the archetypal idea of the primal stream from out in the world to the interior of man. In the mythical age, this archetypal idea was projected into cosmic reality; now, in the scientific age, the same idea is experienced as projected onto the inside of the human body: the coursing of the blood in our veins has become the new carrier of the ancient mythical idea. Man has so to speak incorporated, interiorized

Okeanos, thus freeing the world from the primal river encircling it. But perhaps it would be more fitting to say that man is the victim of this process of transposition of Okeanos. With reference to a mythological motif not too far removed from ours, the motif of the four rivers (e.g. the four rivers of paradise, Gen. 2:10-14, the four rivers flowing from Mount Meru in Indian mythology, the Germanic four rivers originating from the spring Hvergelmir, etc.), David Miller formulated a similar observation: "When the mythological symbol-system dropped away in favor of a more sophisticated view of the cosmos, the rivers went underground into the human body,"[10] namely in the form of the four humors of the body in the Medieval doctrine of the temperaments.

Modern biology concretistically "acts out" this very same imaginal process of the incorporation of the ocean that Miller and I are trying to critically reflect. It has the same idea, but projects it into the literal organism and its environment. It *believes* in the interiorization of the sea through discovering a similar composition of the ions in sea water and in blood (a fact of which A.J. Ziegler kindly reminded me) and by imagining accordingly blood as the sea taken inside the organism. Biologically we therefore say that man has not really become independent from the ocean as the original element of life, he rather carries the sea, "in" whose medium he still lives, around with him inside of his body, in the reduced form of the blood system. Biology, by scientifically demonstrating the idea of the interiorization of the sea to be a literal fact, fulfills psychologically the task of completing the process of this interiorization. Now the interiorization is an avowed theory, whereas with Harvey this interiorization, even if it had already become a fact, remained implicit and unconscious. If it is "scientifically proven" and an objective fact, independent of our thinking and rooted in the reality of our physical nature, that the circulating blood is our own inner "ocean", then the psychological undoing of the original nature of Okeanos as the stream *all around* us has become absolute: reified, physical.

This transformation in the history of the soul is truly tremendous, because it amounts to an inversion of Being, a turning inside out (or rather outside in).[11] Formerly, man existentially stood in the middle of the earth surrounded by the primal stream and knew himself to be encircled by it on all sides; today he carries the stream

of pulsating life in himself! It is obvious that this fact gave man an enormous charge or boost. For it is, as far as the objective psyche is concerned, of no small importance whether man lives with the image of the river of life surrounding everything earthly and thus also his own existence, or whether he lives with the image of the stream of life circulating in his own body. Each of the two possibilities results in a fundamentally different mode of being-in-the-world, in a different relation to himself and to the things on the earth, in an essentially different orientation outwards to the visible and tangible world and upward from the sublunar reality to the celestial sphere. Each frees man to the world in different ways and at the same time sets different limits.

In order to learn what existence in a world surrounded by Okeanos means, we must enter more closely into the mythical imagination of this complex of reality. For the Greek world, I rely largely on the material gathered by Onians.[12] Okeanos was not limited to his manifestation as a river of water. He was more specifically imagined as a serpent girding the world as a solid belt. We already know this serpent from the Egyptian "World Encircler" cited above from Hornung, who was a serpent, as was the Germanic Midgard serpent which (according to Gylfaginning 34) lies in the sea around all countries and bites its own tail. Porphyry comments on a passage from Homer (where mention is made of an assembly of all the Gods to which only one God, Okeanos, was not able to come) that Okeanos had to hold things together. Okeanos thus not only marks the border between world and non-world in a static, geographic sense, he is rather an active and dynamic force to be compared perhaps to the iron tire around a wooden wheel of spokes: the girdle binding and holding together that which it surrounds. That is why he cannot leave, having a function on which the existence of the world depends. As late as Seneca we still hear of the "vinculum terrarum Oceanus." That he has the task of holding the earth together helps us to understand that in another culture, in the shamanistic world of Siberia, the archetypal conception corresponding to the world ocean is not experienced in the image of stream and serpent, but as the unshakable, solid belt of a mountain range (the Altai Mountains).

To be surrounded by Okeanos meant to be bound. And yet, this belt was also dynamic: pure streaming, the stream of events. The

connection between the streaming and binding in the idea of Okeanos is made by an Orphic association. In an Orphic creation myth the world egg is generated by a serpent which arose out of water and slime; and this serpent was called Chronos, a word usually translated as "time". Okeanos as the world stream, the serpent as bond, and time, all belong together in the same archetypal complex of images, as is confirmed by testimonials from other cultures. Thus, e.g., the Bantu believed, "that time is a stream returning into its own source,"[13] and the Egyptians imagined time most of all in the shape of a serpent.[14] In Greek thought, time, serpent and stream expressly come together once more in the figure of Aion. Aion is on the one hand the procreative life-fluid which, as spinal marrow and identified with *psyché,* was likewise envisioned as a serpent (cf. the Kundalini serpent in Indian thinking). On the other hand, Aion was a compelling destiny, a daimon controlling life, from which resulted the meaning of "lifetime", "period of time" ("eon"), and "eternity." For Heraclitus, Aion is the power controlling the changes of the world. As daimon he is represented as a winged lion-headed but otherwise human figure encoiled by a serpent. According to the Orphics, Chronos was mated to Ananke[15] (Necessity), which also lies around the universe, as the Pythagoreans believed.

Time as a circulating stream therefore did not originally have the meaning that we connect with the expressions "cyclical idea of history" or "eternal recurrence" in contrast to a linear conception of time. It is not a question of continuous repetition, but rather of human existence being ontologically imprisoned, as it were, in earthly life as a whole, and in each moment in particular. Whatever passes, whatever the stream of events brings forth, is compelling and inescapable. Ananke nails human existence down to the here and now. Each present is its own Alpha and Omega, just as in ritual cultures the creation of the world was not a one-time event at the beginning of time, but the essential beginning of *each* new time. Here, there is no future into which man could escape from the real present, nor a past which one could look back on as the good old days, in which everything was supposed to have been better. The serpent as inexorable daimon encoils me and holds me fast in my present. The bond encircling all Being compels me ever deeper into each present reality, it forces me to exhaust this reality in its full

intensity. No exit. No escape. Here I can never play a hope for the future against my present real fate, because the serpent of time encloses me hermetically in the experience of this destiny. If this destiny is to have meaning, then this meaning must be born out of the heart of this very destiny and within the unsurpassable borders set by Necessity; it can only be revealed by my "stewing" in whatever happens. Never could it lie in a subsequent event, in a future or a beyond. If each fateful event does not itself unfold its meaning, then there is no meaning at all.

Thus Okeanos is the image by which man expressly situates himself ontologically in his finite nature, as mortal in contrast to the immortals. The almost ubiquitous archaic idea of a primal stream or serpent girding the world, a serpent mated to Necessity (at least according to Greek thought), was in no way suggested by empirical experience. It arose from a psychological necessity: the necessity to commit oneself unrelentingly to life on this earth as it really was (and not as it might be wished to be). In numerous symbols of daily life—public as well as private—and in corresponding ritual acts, archaic man felt the need to continuously keep in his vision his being bound, on the ontological level, by the serpent encircling every here and now. As such symbols I mention band, tie, cord, ring, girdle, noose, knot, yoke, wreathe, crown, woven fabric, spun yarn.

If the poet laureate received a wreath, the victor a crown, band or belt, this originally did not mean an honour for a past deed, it rather was to render visible the bond which was inherent in the deed itself and with which the victor had been invisibly crowned all along by fate, through the very performance of his deed. A victory, an accomplishment, was experienced as a band put on man by the Gods or by the Fates, and this band was thought of as a portion of time, a period in his life, a fate spun by the Moira.

As with victory, kingship was also a band that made he who was bound by it king. We see that in general each event, each action was considered a binding obligation. If this is the case, then I cannot disown a deed I committed, not simply dissociate myself from it ("I did not intend to do it" etc.). The real event commits me to it by virtue of its binding reality. I must acknowledge it, bow to it, must perhaps allow it to teach me about my real nature, in order to live in harmony with my reality and necessity.

The diadem with which the king or victor was crowned also helps us to understand why the collar put around the neck of a slave

would thereby bind him into slavery. There is no essential difference between the band of a king and that of a slave. Both express the inexorable obligation of fate. In the case of slaves, ancient man continuously kept the paradigm of the condition of man before his eyes. Slavery was the literal realization as a social institution of what in essence was the ontological nature of man.[16] This also explains the fact that those who had become slaves basically submitted to and accepted their fate, as Tacitus reports in his *Germania,* where he says that the Teutons play dice with such a recklessness that even after having lost everything, they play, in a last decisive throw, for their freedom and life. The loser goes into slavery without antagonism. Even if he is younger, even if he be stronger, he allows himself to be bound and sold.—We understand why: throwing dice is not a ridiculous accidental affair, it brings to light what kind of band fate has long put around the person concerned. Factual slavery is merely the external realization of an existing fateful necessity. To rebel against it would be foolish. An especially impressive example of this behavior and attitude is found in Indian literature: the dice playing of the hero Yudhisthira in the epic Mahábhárata.

The mandala (which originally was the circle of Time[17]) can be seen in this light, too: as the image of that which binds us unrelentingly into the stream of events. This understanding would remove the belittlement and sugarcoating that Jung's interpretation of the mandala as the representation of the self has acquired among some Jungians within an ideology of "self development" and "growth" and "wholeness." The self could again be understood as the *reign of the inexorable necessity of my nature over myself,* and wholeness or completeness as the *telos,* the compelling band of each fateful portion of time—not *my* wholeness, but the wholeness of each moment.

The word *telos* brings me to another aspect of the encirclement by the Okeanos serpent. The original meaning of *telos* was, according to Onians, not goal, end, or act of completion. Rather it meant the band spun by fate, the band that brings forth the fulfillment of a qualitative portion of time which has its visible embodiment in the diadem. In the world girt by a solid belt, each event, each time, as well as my life as a whole and the world at large, were a priori completed, even if the actual completion had not yet happened and regardless of whether it was a "positive" or a

"negative" event. Each thing, each qualitative moment rested *in itself* and therefore *rested.* The band around each particular time or thing gave each event a measure and a boundary causing it to carry its center of gravity, its meaning, in itself.

For this reason alone was it possible that the world could be experienced as being full of Gods and animated by mythical beings. Necessity binding man into each event was the factor that forced the image or face of each reality to the fore. Unconditionally surrendered to and thrown back upon whatever passed, archaic man could not take refuge in "explaining" events from external, i.e. former causes, nor in hoping for better subsequent events. He had to behold the imaginal depth, the inner essence of each event—the God in it. If Okeanos was unable to come to the assembly of the Gods because he had the task of holding the world together, we now understand that he truly could not come: because his staying where he was made the appearance of the Gods in the world possible in the first place. As the band girt around the world and holding us inescapably in each event, Okeanos grants that kind of embeddedness in Being and that devotion to each moment for which alone man's being-in-the-world (and the world itself) can be of a mythical, poetical constitution. Okeanos can never appear *in* what only through him *is* "world." If he appeared as something in the world, the assembled Gods would immediately be voided inasmuch as then our glance, released from its bond, would flit from one event to the other and we could no longer experience the divine depth of a single one.

The serpent named Okeanos or Chronos who surrounds us on all sides is the image and the guarantee for the *psychological* existence of man. As Jung has stressed again and again, we are enveloped by psyche on all sides, and it is the nature of psyche to be what surrounds us. This same idea is also found in antiquity. When Pythagoras was asked what the serpent Chronos was, he answered that it was the *psychê* of the universe (Onians).

The Orphic Dionysus had the epithet Lyseus (the "Looser"), for he was supposed to loosen, for those to be initiated by certain rites, the cord of the "cares hard to bear." However, the kind of deliverance brought by Dionysus still remained tied to the mythical world surrounded by the serpent; it was merely a deliverance of each individual initiate, without changing the world at large in its

ontological constitution. Total deliverance from the serpent was only brought by Christ. He is the absolute Lyseus who tackles the problem once and for all and fundamentally, of Being as such. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20), Satan who, as we know, is "the old serpent" (Rev. 20:2). Christ has cut any compelling bond, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. . .nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). The beam of the cross even bursts the utmost bond of life as a whole, death: "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebr. 2:14f.). Christian man essentially is delivered man.

Unless we interpret this Christian event of deliverance again in terms of its Christian understanding, this deliverance must be viewed as a trauma, a wounding of Being. The spike of Golgotha has been driven into the joint where the serpent bites its tail, and thus the compelling bond around Being has been burst. The circle of Father Okeanos was broken apart, the closed circle of Time was straightened out into a line stretching in both directions into infinity. Since then, time is linear *Heilsgeschichte*. Now it is possible to speculate with Jaspers about "The Origin and Goal of History" and with Teilhard de Chardin about an evolution from "point Alpha" to "point Omega" and to break out of the compelling ring of each present into the future (hope for the beyond, utopias, Ernst Bloch) or into the past (historicism, restoration, conservation, nostalgia). Now there is an exit, and the idea of a "Huit clos" or "No Exit" becomes equivalent to hell (Sartre), which incidentally once more substantiates the truth of the earlier experience, even if only through the hostile medium of the modern longing for freedom from every bond, for hell is nothing but the demonized underworld and thus still reflects the finite nature of man.

Of course, deliverance through Christ was at first still bound to what in Christian terminology is called "faith"; redemption was thus a specific psychic state. History shows that the Christian world did not and probably could not rest content with deliverance as a psychic state and thus subject to contingent, empirical factors in the lives of individuals; for faith was always threatened by doubt and indifference. Deliverance, however, had to become an *absolute certainty* and, beyond being a personal experience, also a "cosmic"

reality. For "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:14, 19). Thus there was a strong inner pressure from within Christianity itself to transform deliverance from a mere ontic condition of each person into an ontological mode of Being, a mode truly prevailing even if the individual was not personally in the state of faith and firmly founded in it. The Christian truth had to be reified, turned into a "physical" truth. After the Middle Ages established man firmly in faith as a subjective condition, Western man was put into a position to also translate the objective nature of the world and of man into the ontological state of deliverance. This has been the task of the modern age, at the end of which, that is, today, an additional step in the development becomes visible: the seeping down of the now ontologized and reified redemption into the personal psyche of the individual. For most of the so-called "psychological problems", most of the neuroses turning up in the consulting-room of the analyst, can in their deeper content be understood as Christianity regressed into the personal psyche.

The devout man of the Middle Ages essentially lived in a world that still corresponded to the pre-Christian existence-in-Necessity (which now in Christian parlance might be translated as "sickness unto death", existence in sin) which in no way expressed deliverance. The medieval *ordo* was still encircled and held together by a primal ocean. Man still lived devoted to the present; each individual activity, such as that of the craftsman, carried its meaning in itself. Faith merely had exchanged the former polytheistic Gods for the One God of Christianity, but it had by and large left the ontological state of the world as it had always been.

But how was deliverance from Okeanos, from the uroboric serpent, from Time (Chronos; the Christian *saeculum)* to become an objective ontological reality, if existence was indeed surrounded by the World Encircler? How could the primal stream enclosing the world be removed? Certainly, through Christ, the serpent had long been overcome. But only *for* the psychic condition of *each* believer, whereas the world (including the world of the believer himself) remained held together by Necessity, with the only difference being that this Necessity was now given Christian names such as God's Providence. The task thus still remained to be fulfilled, and it was

an enormous task: how could that reality the very meaning and essence of which was absolutely inescapable because it surrounded human existence on all sides, be removed precisely by him who was encircled by this inescapable force? How could man, as it were, pull himself out of a swamp by his own hair? The stream of events flowing around human existence as such could not truly be gotten rid of, compelling Necessity could not really be removed: it could only be *interiorized*. The manifestation of the event of this ontological incorporation of Okeanos by man was Harvey's invention of the circulation of blood. The pulsating stream of life, the ever circling origin of all spontaneity, was now located in man himself. He was no longer exposed to Okeanos and the inescapability of Being; he carried them in his body, and only to the extent that he carried them in himself were the head and tail of the serpent coiled around the world torn apart and the world freed to be absolutely open, without limits and measure.

Thus in a certain way Illich is right after all in stating that the idea of a stuff circulating in itself had been completely unknown to the ancients. If by stuff one means the visible and tangible, then the water of Okeanos was no stuff. For Okeanos was, as we heard from Kerényi, "not an ordinary stream", that is, not a phenomenon *in* the world like the other streams, not an object of a possible (empirical) perception. Wherever you might go in the visible world, you would never come across Okeanos as a river lying before your eyes, because such going inevitably would take place within the world enclosed by him so that everything that you might come across would be a priori have been encircled by him. But Okeanos is the outermost border between world and non-world. As such, he has, even as a stuff (water or solid band: serpent, mountain-range), an imaginal nature, and it was only as an imaginal stream or rather as the stream of the imaginal that he was the continuous source of all the visible waters in the world. The reason why the invention of the circulation of blood is radically novel is that now circulation is attributed to something *in* the world, an ontic, empirical stuff, which was also the birth of the idea of a "stuff" proper. The circulation of blood is truly "material" because it has its ontological foundation and its truth exclusively in its literal, physical, and manifest existence, whereas for the mythological mind even the visible rivers, indeed all things in the world, were not merely physical stuff,

since they originated, and thus had their truth in, the stream of the imaginal that was expressly called the "generation of all." Therefore the inversion of Being that occurred with the shift from Okeanos to the circulating blood also means a fundamental removal of man and the world from the ontological medium of the imaginal and their transposition into the medium of ontic, literal materiality.

It seems that the archetypal idea of Okeanos—or whatever name we want to give to the inexorable stream of events—proves to be an inescapable reality even at the time of our deliverance from it. For this deliverance did not really free us from the bond of Okeanos; we might even say that it burdened us with it in a much more oppressing fashion inasmuch as it now is, instead of an imaginal reality, a literal (medical) reality and is "stuffed" into the narrow confines of the personal existence of each of us. It is questionable whether the inside of us is a better place than the outermost border of the earth. If Okeanos is now in us, is this not as if we had swallowed something too big and indigestible? For now we occasionally have to suffer from its compelling force very literally in our own bodies (heart attacks, circulatory collapse, hardening of the arteries, not to mention the purely psychological "problems" that we now have to wrestle with within ourselves—the space contained in the skin—whereas formerly, their equivalent could avail themselves of the wide expanse of the entire mythical world).

The invention of the circulation of blood rendered Christ into an ontological reality and thus made the unleashing of Being, initiated by Christ, definitive. The handwriting of fate through any event has been blotted out. No matter what a person has done, his deed no longer represents a compelling obligation for him: Christ is the guarantee for the ultimate deliverance from all our actions and fates. Christ is *the* alternative, i.e. the fundamental availability of a (maybe not always empirical, but metaphysical) way out of the binding necessity of what passed. The essential confinement in finite, earthly existence has been lifted, man is no longer "servant" of and in "bondage" to death as the inexorable border around our lives; he is absolutely "free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). This is why Paul does not have to shake the foundations of slavery as a social institution, because this is a trifle compared to the world-shaking metaphysical deliverance he is concerned with. If Paul

speaks of man "according to the flesh" and "according to the law of sin", he does not refer, on the ontic level, to obvious evildoers and slovens. He much more radically and comprehensively aims for the ontological state of those whose condition it is to be bound by the inexorable band of each real situation. It is a total attack against man's original embeddedness in Being.

As soon as deliverance ceased being merely a psychological state of man (faith) and turned into an ontological reality, the band around the earth was burst asunder even in the ontological constitution of empirical reality, so that the cosmos opened up into an infinity of worlds (Giordano Bruno), reality became a realm of unlimited possibilities, and all things of this earth were delivered over to man's will without restraint. The things and moments that formerly had firmly been enclosed in their eachness (by virtue of which they each carried their own center of gravity and value, in the last analysis: their God, in themselves), were now, ontologically speaking, equalitarian pieces or parts of a homogeneous space and a homogeneous time.

The mythical, metaphysical reality of the Christ as the absolute deliverer having turned from an object of devotion into man's ontological constitution: this is what made the revolutionary and untamed upsurge of the modern age possible—the starting out of explorers from Columbus to the astronauts; the spiralling development of the sciences; the limitless urge to go beyond the natural world of things with shape and contour into the boundlessness of the dimensions of astronomical magnitude and micro-physical minuteness; the unleashed longing for the optimal, and the endless craze for stimulation through ever new attractions and through experiences that might provide an answer to the question of the meaning of life. Deliverance from the serpent means the absolute unleashing of desire. The kind of man whose nature is defined as having interiorized the primal stream from out there into himself does not any longer know himself to be contained in and bound to the world by an inextricable band, and conversely he no longer experiences the world as a binding obligation, but rather as essentially free prey for manipulation, indeed for exploration and exploitation. Only man with blood circulation can and must start out in search of new continents or venture into outer space or into the realm of micro-physics. He alone must search for the meaning of life.

At the time at which Okeanos still held the world together, each thing was, as we pointed out, firmly enclosed and man was inescapably bound by each of his actions. This is why people of earlier ages could find fulfillment in kinds of manual work that we would consider intolerably monotonous, such as when African women grind their grains by hand for hours every day, or when in our culture logs were manually sawn into boards, or wool spun into yarn throughout the winter. Fulfillment was possible because these people were, by virtue of the ontological situation, devoted to each activity and did not, could not wish to get out of it, inasmuch as the band of the serpent tied them to and held them in whatever they did. Delivered man can no longer truly dwell in the moment. He must hasten onwards to other moments, to some kind of beyond which alone might give a meaning to a particular present. He needs machines to relieve him of all monotonous work in order for him to be freed for a higher life "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9): for planning grand designs, control—perhaps also for educational and cultural activities, sports, entertainment, encounter groups or other psychological experiences. Paradoxically, even monotonous activities such as spinning or knitting can now be rediscovered—but only as pastimes affirming man's absolute freedom, that is, as the opposite of what they once were: necessary work.

The circle of man's economic intercourse with nature was also broken, the closed circle which according to Marx's analysis consisted of the fact that in earlier agricultural societies the exchange of goods more or less solely served the purpose of providing what was to be consumed, without producing any profit.[18] At the moment when, in the same ages that saw the beginnings of the journeys of discovery, of modern science and the invention of circulation, money turned from a mere means of exchange into self-generating "capital" in the sense of Marx, an explosion had happened and the economic growth spiral had been set in motion. Since then we have had a growth of needs for commodities as well as of industrial production to fill these needs, which ultimately resulted in the reduction of things to the alienated goods of a throw-away society. Again we must say: only man with blood circulation can be a capitalist.

Through the linear stretching of Time, human existence has been placed into the ontological mode of the comparative (in the linguistic sense): it is now subject to the idea of the "better", the

desirable. This idea and its absolute culmination in the idea of the "best" ("optimal") could alone give rise to optimism and pessimism, which would have been impossible during the time of Ananke, since at that time everything was the way it was, and the flirtation with the idea of the better was a priori excluded by the unsurpassable border marked by the primal ocean between Being and Non-Being, reality and possibility. Man lived in the "positive form", outside of or prior to any degree of comparison: in his reality regardless of whether it was, as we today might say, "positive" or "negative." The Teuton, we remember, allowed himself to be sold into slavery without antagonism once he had lost his freedom through dice. Modern man, by contrast, who on account of the circulation in himself is delivered from the binding stream around himself, can never rest content in any situation, he at once must demand something better. Leibniz tried to rescue some kind of contentedness within the real world by his labored proof that this world was "the best of all possible worlds" and that we live in "the optimum". But as soon as this proof no longer finds credence, the untamed desire for the better must upsurge and drive the one into the country of unlimited possibilities, the other into revolutionary hopes for a better future and an ideal society, and the third into conservative hopes for a restoration of the good old days or, in the case of the pessimistic variant, into resignation, cynicism or suicide.

Even though people still buy wedding rings when they marry, man today nevertheless is, even in marriage, essentially delivered man (delivered also from the bond of marriage), i.e. he is a priori divorced. As the one who is delivered from the ring of Necessity, the demand for the "optimal" spouse is indispensable to him or her. He or she must always hope to be able to reform the other: marriage as a kind of reformatory for one's spouse. There simply would have to be a time—this is the hope out of which the married person lives—when the other would finally come to his senses and change for the better, change into the ideal spouse that one had sought in him or her all along. Countless fights arise because the one wants to have his or her spouse *better* than he or she is. Delivered man cannot rest content with the way his spouse really is, and cannot see that each human being is, as it were, a hopeless case. He cannot admit that marriage means to be inescapably bound into a life with the other person as he or she really is (no exit) and to have the task of getting along with him or her for better or worse; to even come

to learn to like his or her faults, to love him or her with all his or her faults. To be essentially "hopeless": this is the very meaning of marriage. But this is something delivered man cannot by any means accept, because deliverance means to be thrall to hope. It is an especially striking example for the dissociation in Christian consciousness that the doctrine of the Catholic church insists on the indissolubility of marriage and prohibits divorce without realizing that it is *its own truth*—deliverance of man—which alone forces many married people onto the road leading to divorce. The Christian truth is inseparable. If man in the Christian world is delivered, then this does not only apply to the "Sunday creed", but also to everything in all of life that would represent a compelling obligation.

Only with the invention of the blood circulation do inner and outer world begin to separate. At the time when man was inescapably encircled by Okeanos, his existence was essentially moored *in* the world and thus he necessarily would look at events occurring in the world from within, with an "inner" perspective, and see them in their imaginal depth: as image and God. It was his embeddedness that made the world (and everything in it) brighten up in a mythical light, for the psychological or poetic nature of the world is nothing but the correlate of man's rootedness in his reality. Mythical imagination is not a psychological property of man, that may be employed or not; it is an ontological state, a fundamental way man is positioned in the cosmos: being inescapably surrounded by the serpent *psyché*. Circulation of the blood, on the other hand, means that now the border between life and non-life, between the essential and the non-essential falls into the empirical world itself: what is outside of it is the cold, dead "external world", whereas true life is surrounded by it as the "interior", the "inner world". It is thanks to circulation that modern man turned into a "subject" who has the things of this world as his "objects" inevitably outside of and opposite himself. "Inside" and "outside" are split apart only by the *incorporated* border stream of Being; exteriorization or alienation is only borne from the interiorization of Okeanos.

In accordance with our habitual parlance I have spoken of the subject having the object opposite himself. But actually, it is not an opposition that we are dealing with here. As man now has circulation in himself and is no longer moored *in* whatever happens to pass, he is now free to totally surround the phenomena of the world

himself. Works of art, e.g., have becomes "objects" by being placed in a museum showcase so that we can walk around them and view them from all sides, whereas originally they would, as altar piece, mask, or statue of a God, have "assaulted" man with their demand for devotedness, in which sense they would have surrounded man ontologically on all sides. The things studied by the sciences are "objects" because, having become mute and outlawed, they can be turned and twisted at the scientist's pleasure so that the scientific glance surrounds them completely. Every theory of knowledge has, simply by virtue of the question it asks and not only because it would give a comforting answer, the psychological task of enabling modern man to ever newly and in principle satisfy himself as to his ability to encircle each and every thing. Deliverance from the embeddedness in Being is only complete if man himself has become the Thing-and-World-Encircler. And only as the World Encircler is he truly "subject". Thus the subject is not so much opposite but much rather fundamentally *above* whatever he looks at as his object, in just about the same way that the Creator God is above his work, having a complete overview of it and penetrating with his glance into the very heart of things.

Erich Neumann's psychology, too, serves the purpose of once and for all interiorizing what originally was the World Encircler. Neumann turns the uroboros who once was the very circle of Time into a mere phase in a person's psychological evolution, a phase that we as adults have long overcome, even if perhaps we should now or then regress to it. Whereas the circle of Time, as the serpent biting its tail, was beginning *and end* in one, it now is only the starting point from which the line of development extends to the stage of the solar consciousness of the hero: the circle is reduced to a point on the straight line and is thus incorporated by the line. Formerly, the beginning was precisely not a point *from* which something started, it was what kept everything that it was the beginning of inexorably encircled and thus *shut in:* Okeanos, the "generation of all." All dynamics and all development of an initiated event remained enclosed by and under the rule of its beginning (that is why Greek *archê* means beginning as well as rule): all streams, springs, wells continuously arose from the primal stream surrounding everything. And the heroes of myth (Herakles, Theseus, Siegfried, etc.) as mythological figures perform their deeds *within*

the world enclosed by the uroboros, whereas for Neumann heroic consciousness is characterized precisely by having stepped out of the uroboric. Neumann deprives that which would relentlessly encircle us of the inescapability of its encircling us. But as soon as the Okeanos serpent is no longer inescapable and does not enclose us *until the end;* as soon as Okeanos, too, could come to the assembly of the Gods as just one among them because he would have become dispensable, the uroboros would have ceased being an uroboros. The instrument for rendering the reigning serpent encircling us powerless is here the idea of development, for it reduces the mythological insight into man's ontological constitution to the idea of an ontic condition, correlated to a particular evolutionary phase in the life of empirical man: a falling out from psychology into biology, from the realm of the imaginal into the question of the literal child, the literal mother and the literal evolution from the embryo onwards.

From the perspective of evolutionary thinking, archaic man must appear primitive, which, even if we are expressly assured that this word is not to be understood as a derogatory term, nevertheless does mean as much as "still without ego," "with *undeveloped* ego," "representing an earlier stage." I would like to set another understanding against this view: the primitive as that kind of man who is embedded in Necessity, inexorably devoted to his real present, who has not escaped from Being into deliverance. The temporal interpretation of the primitive in the sense of "early stage" etc. only serves the purpose of rendering the compelling time serpent impotent.

The man of blood circulation is called upon to be a self-contained whole, a "personality", an "individual." The "personality" is nothing but the concrete way man represents himself—to others and to himself—as the "Grosse Runde" (Neumann), as a closed circle. We might say that it is to William Harvey (this name only taken as a cipher) that we owe the entire humanistic, educational idealism of a Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Humboldt, the urge to develop one's personality or one's self, furthermore the need to put the idea that I as individual am an inner infinity and carry the entire world in myself (the World Encircler in psychological guise). We also owe to him the compulsion to be free (freedom of thought, emancipation, liberation, free development of the personality,

freedom from work: vacation, weekends, and leisure time). Modern man *must* be free, because only to the extent that he is free in various respects is deliverance from the compelling *telos* of Okeanos made true. Without blood circulation, the idea of the genius would also be unthinkable, for at the times of Okeanos, *people* were not geniuses, but a relentless *daimon* or *genius* dwelled in them as in all of nature.

But modern man having turned into a personality is by virtue of the circle that he himself now is, not only free, but also enclosed in himself and decidedly impenetrable, unaffectable. It is not only through arteriosclerosis that a hardening occurs; modern man is a priori hardened on the ontological level, inaccessible to the imaginal depth of events. For the circle is the perfect, the unassailable figure. Nothing can penetrate the armour of the hard circular shell. Monads, as Leibniz rightly stated, have no windows. They are closed, once and for all. This cannot be undone by "sensitivity training," by trying to learn to feel and to be open to emotional experiences. Emotional experiences are precisely what only that kind of man can have who is conceived as a holistic personality and thus a priori locked into himself. As individuals and subjectivities we are fundamentally, namely ontologically, removed from that existential locus at which we could be reached and affected. Whatever happens to us, however emotionally upset we might be: it is never *more* than an ontic state of emotionality occurring on ontologically armoured man. Only as long as man had his ontological essence in being encircled by relentless Necessity and thus in being embedded in the world could he be reached and struck by the essence of events, because only then was he unconditionally exposed to what happened and as such vulnerable. Just as the world became free prey to man's manipulation as soon as uroboric Okeanos was bent apart, so conversely was the inner substance of man a priori permeable for the imaginal depth of events and the demands that they made on him, as long as man had not turned into a self-contained, enclosed circle. Reichian therapy's attack on character armour, too, is of no avail, happening long after the fact and not reaching down to the root of the matter. Indeed, it attempts to fixate the problem by trying to get precisely the *interiorized* Okeanos into renewed and increased flux.

Okeanos was, as we said, pure streaming. Since man no longer is *in* the circulating stream of Time, but carries the stream of life in

himself, the pulse of life is now dependent on him, on each individual human being. It is man who now, with his own effort and willpower, has to keep Time moving. He must be its motor, because he now exists as the very circle of Time. Is it astonishing that modern man is plagued by haste and stress, is compelled to perform, must do physical exercises and prove to himself his youthfulness again and again as long as he lives, until circulatory failure or heart attack may after all put an inexorable end to him, delivered man? Is it astonishing that he who carries the border stream between Being and Non-Being personally in himself is plagued by neuroses—neuroses whose nature it is to be a kind of compromise formation between some compelling and obsessive force and the indispensable striving for freedom from any imposed *telos*, freedom from any fateful obligation binding my nature and life?

NOTES

[1] Ivan Illich, *H_2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness. Reflections on the Historicity of "Stuff"*, Dallas (The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture) 1985, chapter "Harvey Invents Circulation". On Harvey and the discovery of the blood circulation from a psychological, imaginal perspective see the essential study by James Hillman, "The Thought of the Heart", *Eranos 48-1979*, p. 133-82, Frankfurt (Insel) 1981.

[2] Karl Kerényi, *Die Mythologie der Griechen*, vol. I, München (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag) 1979, p. 19. My translation.

[3] Erik Hornung, *Der Eine und die Vielen*, Darmstadt (Wiss. Buchgesellschaft) 1971, esp. pp. 154 and 276 f.

[4] Hermann Bengtson and Vladimir Milojčič, *Großer Historischer Weltatlas, Erläuterungen I. Teil*, München (Bayerischer Schulbuch-Verlag) 1954, col. 58.

[5] Kerényi, ibid., my italics and translation.

[6] Hornung, op. cit., p. 154.

[7] Kerényi, ibid.

[8] Plato, Phaidon, 112 d and e.

[9] See Weizsäcker, Article "Okeanos" in W.H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie,* 816.

[10] David L. Miller, "Achelous and the Butterfly: Toward an Archetypal Psychology of Humor," in: *Spring 1973,* pp. 1-23, here p. 8.

[11] The process of the "inversion of Being" is briefly discussed in my paper "Saving the Nuclear Bomb," in: *Facing Apocalypse,* Dallas (Spring Publications) 1987, pp. 96-108, and at greater lengths in my book, as yet unpublished, *Psychoanalyse der Atombombe. Ein Versuch über den Geist des christlichen Abendlandes.*

[12] Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate.* Reprint of the 1951 (Cambridge, University Press) edition, New York (Arno Press) 1973, esp. pp. 249 ff., 316 ff., 411 ff., 443 ff.

[13] *My People, The Incredible Writings of Credo Vusa'mazulu Mutwa,* Harmondsworth (Penguin) 1971, p. 54, quoted from H. Gehrts, "Initiation," in: *GORGO 8,* 1985, p. 11.

[14] See E. Hornung, "Die Entdeckung des Unbewußten in Altägypten", *GORGO 9,* 1985, p. 63.

[15] On Ananke see James Hillman, "On the Necessity of Abnormal Psychology—Ananke and Athene," *Eranos 43-1977,* Leiden (Brill) 1974. Expanded version in: *Facing the Gods,* ed. J. Hillman, Irving (Spring) 1980.

[16] Concerning the topic of slavery cf. Hillman, op. cit. (*Facing the Gods)* p. 6 and note 12 (p. 34).

[17] H. Gehrts, "Beitrag zur Polytheismus-Diskussion," *GORGO 2/1979,* p. 62, who on the other hand emphasizes that the mandala can at the same time *also* represent the opposite, the standing eternity of the mono-God.

[18] Cf. David Holt, "Jung and Marx: alchemy, christianity, and the work against nature." In: *Harvest 1975,* p. 50 f.

KARIN LESSING

Under Sirius

on heaven's
neck

rose
over the crest

the star
perilous

house
of exaltation

•

climbed

instant into instant

as if

beyond
all drought

•

signals

bleached, immaculate

paths, once
linked

marvelous ladders

•

and their rouged clay
bodies

loaves
of myrrh

•

raised

as from a slanted
mirror, the

fragrance

from their jars. . .

with-
in echoed, the

clear, ever in-
accessible

gardens, those

poured
into glass

•

. . .and the earth, blind,

reckless

is drawn
the strain

of love

•

fever-

star, burning

in the thick
of sleep

I hear

drilling
itself

into the summer's heart.

CLARK COOLIDGE

Section III from At Egypt

III.

I see the blank wall coming back in lighter and lighter tones
that and the thought of nobody's lap, phantom stance
walking the low struck hills of Egypt, Mars
cats crying still by nightlong gravels rolling
as the lope I enjoyed pulling the camel head past the rubble
piles
trumpet through nervous head the papyrus strain, a quick
and blurred and blue at the top and creaking miles of paper
stairs
here my name is Benchmark James, English geologist
of fluorescent sets and spare time, counting by camel sticks
and the jam in the helicopter flask, train tea and lots of still
chicken
the bones of a musical score all over the mastered land
as I camp down by the soft shafts with wig hat of an indigo
and unbelievable saturate of dress at the soft paint sunset
I'd said I'd have to see it all again by moon
by any artifice at all to inch in and stretch out
the remnants under

As if to see
It leads you
He slides

Then, Peter is the name of the man with none
toilet seat cover like a tombstone, touch it
morning bricks, a more careful bric-a-brac of dreams?
buses in lumps and worsted space
and the man is telling me, spinning, he says. . .
but does this thin work?

It is out
No, it's not
His thought

This thought taken from the bus we have hauled, all Cairo
of wrapped cars, the ones of metal numbers under woven hemp
skin
it says, chemicals for modern building, precipitate rending
the banana verandas, thought to go but now it's back
collapsed to new slant cement slab porches
an asteroid will hit the Twinky coffee shop
balancing tiles of Center street, withdrawn of its meat
in djellaba hands, beneath carapace awnings, the pajama boys
and a pregnant chartreuse at bus wait, prongs of firework
those guys lay up on lashed frameworks, paint RADAR
at housetop, place to wait on a morning myth
or astronomic aim, huge minarets toy with
a swallow shadowing the cement side in contract beeps
as the world announces the world, to Christ Car Wash tip
pronouncing Wimpy among the oculist witnesses of heavy
women land
passed by a dice truck and then the zoo goes by, zebras!

This is the sky lot of coffin arms, the monuments
limestone politicos, their resting hands on sphinx pates
or hand-dipped candle palms, yellow headed statesmen
poor, what else but meditate? at the Club Beak
or Nautique Hellenique, Nileside, straw bedside
a volume of Coins of the World in Danger of the Lipton tea
board
and busted windows of the planetarium dusty flat hat spin
I see the rainy stars iron by, arrow by hot plate
this bus has a lariat, the Nile its fill of floating beans
seagulls service Man With Head, lions guard the bridgehead
they're digging a Metro in Cairo Center, day and night in the
hole
the white rubber boots

Things of it said
Dropped down to tip
Rock at leaded him

Diorite and alabaster, serpentine marble
limestone painted pink to resemble granite
source pink granite, sandstone terminal
carnelians of the pebbles, lapis from elsewhere

And the black onyx is the eye
of the hole in your finger
and the turquoise a moist closet
amethyst a liquid sweet gives the throat a tug
twinge of gold toe caps in the silver sarcophagus

Stones dead as a life left out
in the open ledge of a fraction, stones breasting the shaft
the stones that keep you, struck from any motion
stones lit at the last

The stones on which the story of the cats who brought the mice
their mice was drawn, the cats, reversed, who served
their mice the food, their mice drinks, who brought
the biggest mouse a smaller mouse, nursed the mouse
child, paid deep homage to a rodent throne

On which the harp string hands clenched
were stroked and lost to the clicking pile, amassed
to the single closed hand drawn from the finger side
profile of the casual sure, Picasso knew so quick
he drained its filament lake, reliant report
of animal knob, sting of birdbrain fringe
cold as the daub restored, tensed then tossed away
among, along brought back, within those fractal floors

They line up
pulling by means, means the long snake tongue
the princesses tug, snake body blubbers under boat hull
meanwhile

the means, spacing of the deads? well spewn in mind
but the boatman is ramming a spear down the mouth at the
prow
and this all slips long around a scroll

And the
Slip it slips
Round the slip

Dainty accidents with poison penises dipped in paint
it's a Sadean scene, intruding the extension of masculine
membership
into long black borders of snake and hitch
then they all stand up and the fuck comes out of their mouths
a blend back into a smirch of movement hips, cause flesh
in nipple repetition, a dotting of lines in the hill of bare sac
they heave the blacks of cock, recline on triangular block
pinks of a geometry shameless in the strip of epic lash
the focal point Anus Anubis, he targets there
in sexual scroll of degrees, a blues on ointment jars
at one end awaitings on the high scratch lubricious
she tongues at the exit of hallway death, lurch intense
balled at the cunt of mechanism snake, his curl erect saw
one ends at the rest of the tale, the girl all whip with waiting
the sideways girl of the single overpouring shrug breast globe
remains and in baboon remains, it's the drill
of the layout itching picture, the clay point rapture

And how come how could
You imagine it
Says something

Snake death a la Picasso, and the other says "I am
the Egyptian painter", that Tut went to his reward with
fifty sixty boomerangs among the veritable attic, the good
boat attic, the silver timer hold, in a ringwork lock
ointment timer frond, freebasing color matter lumps
like going to heaven in your attic or basement, like going
twigs with shredded ends of brushes, for larval teachers

and the head comes over the style with a thump, an earth space
ring
of the moth bread pucks of styli in the original

The heads say
As it clangs
Claims in morsel space

Breasts held to hover on snaps of breath
bed as the hill where night is the binder
and the holes occur to one
naked girl covered with stars spreads over the dead guy
carved into the bottom of his sarcophagus cover stone
who did the arithmetic on all this death?
or did dogs bark in the time camp?

But what did you leave blowing in the basement?
here we hum in the diorite museum
the hold of rooms given to death thing
arcade of perfect duck and goose edges
alabaster entrail box filled with solution
in case of tall halls, shuffle deep to the quartz hilt
in case the entire body of which might be needed again?
could be I might have to picture myself past this?
hold on the rock singular?
but basement opens to attic in this dust spread dream

You have to take it
The language its
Fable blacks or
Cushion cuts
Out

Fill the museums with liquid like the eyes
and spread away and let everything else dry beyond
the central chamber with the white piano he couldn't look at
in his dream, blinding as it gets, descending enough
stairs into the earth, comes up with nothing more
inside, it needs to be kept, fluid

as you see the forms all pass
dwindle, and the stone spire

It says "bolts"
You clench it in
Its fists

Place where there is no veering you could avoid
having a car to leap off and on through, beep of boy mob
madness in perpetual vast as whistle continuous
strew flare and have the goodness to scream, wait
and lose the chance at all watch on doors
bodies raised through outdoor floors, nerve horn fabric
scribble scribble, midst of a bus match the morning
mirage of the afternoon sodium

Or you could rent through the streets, this one to keep
Farouk-A-Car under fissure in isinglass brownness
these men exist streets, dust off among the oranges
forget where you are in these bodies, would you want to
hand-off my only banquet cigarette, a thankyou
so unheard to be it glows with the remains
"I'm fine" as if all that overall lasted were
brow interminable glasses

To be seen
Upon these questions
They go down

Does the alphabet you know have a turn of ledge or shift of
elbow
circuit of streets, clutter of stoppered clay bottles
useful for assorting perfumes, bend an ear and duck
out of the way of, the outstretched arms of gemstone mongery
barely any fields, such a lot of cigarettes offered in this town
town of thistles for brushing the lights, perimeter of roses
in the dependent night, and towers out of coffee whorl
to see Bunk Johnson's Blackstrap Papyrus Lab near Garden City
as in Cranston or any home near or far from here, out

where the guy took his papers away and left a market
the goal of all mingles is a ball

Long since that man lifted the hatch on all Egypt
his hand continued up and raised the blue sky
in keeping on leashes your aggravations, many small dogs so
filtering down in dots from the Paraphernalia Towers
and a geologic opera in the broke planetarium
the Denizens, their major industry is us
and someone future will glass-case our adjustors
where Reagan isn't worth the sneeziest scarab
and everyone speaks from pressure, SAND HOTEL, of
    desert-clogged pipes
every day we've crossed the Nile twice

Dreamed of the cannonading dog hoards of carnival Cairo
the two men on rattly rags prostrate, Mecca at rush hour
midst all sides of darkness and bus confusion, nobody to bother
I keep my breast on the own side and sometimes
the nipple is a pressable stud, a painful goodnight
in the morning, the entrance to morning anyway, a pistol slide

The dogs answer the chickens, but cats cut between
prowl kings, the one big store announce easy kits for smokes
and another whiteness of glass illuminates, Dewlap Police Adit
jets in the overhead sound the air out of buses
dogs echo mouse precise, static inside this hotel
beryls in my head, precious semiprecious
stones for the answer, and the snake always rising

Did you enter a problem-solving dream?
I don't own anything, from the words on down
fiberglass pants down greenglass stairs
he wants to look at me, why should he not?
in the back in the dark on the bus, nobody said anything
smart for whole vacuums of time, shunt sign
I left you off on Bolt Drive, a place where the all
public data is in perfect drivel scriptions
"Jesus, man, a million-year-old saw!" back in watered

time, a time for matter contain, elapse
Imagine your whole life orients
toward pyramid center death
or get a slant political on life systems failure
a map in the diorite cancel of area
the Book to Gather Grains of Sand
this topological alarm remainder, the saving of a band
from cap or beer, the local omnipresent huge brown STELLA
hidebound here to mark out a monument
this anciency an industry, but I feel the closer
to the Old Egyptian then to spelled-out Roman
or even the Greek, why this?
they gained a clarity of the mystery

Not so far away
It says
Not so true
To death he is

SUB RROSA

Sub Rrosa n° 1. A description of "Etant Donnés: le la chute d'eau, 2e le gaz d'éclairage" by Marcel Duchamp.

This is an assemblage constructed in a clandestine, second studio by Marcel Duchamp over the 20 years (1946-66), when it was claimed implicitly and explicitly that he was no longer engaged in the making of artworks. The existence of the work was known primarily to Duchamp's wife and assistant for the work, Teeny; much later (1968) to a friend who helped negotiate its purchase; and, after his death in 1968, to the museum officials who, from Duchamp's own meticulous plans, diagrams, and photographs installed "Etant Donnés. . ." in the Arensberg Collection of the Philadelphia Museum.[1] Sub rosa he made it, and sub rosa we view it.

To the side of the bright room in the Arensberg Collection, containing "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even" and some other notable Duchamps and Duchamp-kits, there is a dark, odd room which contains nothing. At one end in a wall is built a heavy barn door framed in bricks. This is "real," a door which is or was a door.[2] Its hinges however are absent. Until the publication of the facsimile notebook which contains Duchamp's diagrams and photographic aids to reassembling this "approximation démontable," there was a fifteen year ban on the reproduction of the interior tableau, an interdiction now apparently lifted.[3]The temporary play with the inviolable interior was perversely appropriate, as people have felt that the interior is one of the most violable nudes in the history of art. But I am getting ahead of a body of statement.

on the side a thickening a bird's
egg plum down sidling sidelong along
fear THRUSHt down in the word

Walked in to a dark side room, and therein (darkly) up to a rustic door, in which, among the thick nails, there are two eyeholes. Peeped in, curious, saw an oval blast through brick (coded: explosion/explosive; coded: a cinematic fade-thru piercing solids). And through that frame a succinct diorama, as lush and pretty, as filled with an atmospheric stagey light as the best Museums of Natural History provide. The feeling is crystalline, blue with puff clouds; the trees evoking all four seasons (pink, green, rust,

frosty), and painterly creams of colors stage-lit. Thoroughly "retinal," thoroughly sentimental, one adds, filled with rage and méchante-ness, for the méchance of being a contradiction? an estrangement? a sucker? a puppet, a toy toyed with: *the marked marker*[4] Who is as rebuffed by the work as sucked into it, who may be it, who is "not it." Hide and seek. One can never get close enough to this to "really see" it, for Duchamp prescribes the distance and the level of discomfort you feel (mouth and nose to wood, pushing the door) in the position of consumed consumer. Consumed with curiosity, desire, rage, shame, powerlessness.[5]

In the museum, we graze among representations, pretend possessors, possessive pretenders, the very conventions of display (anthology, supermarket, store window) in a nonfunctional setting (not a real kitchen for the artifacts, not a real temple for the altar, not a real room for the painting) compelling us to be flaneurs engaged in a sensational practice, culling our version of the rare. In some complicit critique of the museum—playing the museum against itself, playing with the secret, the hidden in this cornucopia of openness, and playing out the museum's social postures of possessor, collector, connoisseur—Duchamp has engineered a mandatory posture for the viewing of this piece, uncharacteristic for the museum's mobile, park-like qualities. This posture of peeking, peering into a secret space evokes overlays of an erotic sort (peepshows, pornographic bookstores) admixed with early 20th century childhood pleasures (of 3-D shows on the stereopticon, of folk parades with floats of giants). Duchamp plays with sex and the museum, putting visual conventions of pornography and sexual display at the core of the collection, and creating some frank oscillation between art appreciation and "ard" titillation, between the arousal to visual pleasure and the arousal to sexual pleasure.[6] So walk up to the door curious; walk away having been made a voyeur.

The main content of this diorama is a life-sized, foreshortened, somewhat disproportionate and cut waxy-looking object which does rather resemble a naked pink woman. "Woman": a lump of female matter, the botanical markers of sex (one breast, open legs) loosely displayed in allusion. The exact feminine arm (yet a gigantic hand!), holding a lamp (the "gaz d'éclairage" or afflatus of clear purity), a lady of the lamp kind of arm, extending into this picture realistically and ideologically straight from the 19th century. Bringing with it the sweet nobility of "Womanhood" and such cultural icons of enlightenment as Florence Nightingale and the Statue of Liberty. It may even derive from medieval tableaux of the wise virgin who holds her lamp upright. It is also a post-war piece, mythologizing a supine, sexualized female. The virginity and intellectual nobility of the lamp shine on the distorted, manipulated ideological and visual hit of sex.

For this isn't what you "see." What you see, head on, ahead of you, is cunt. Estranged cunt, the cant or can't of cunt. Duchamp has made a

twisted, asymmetrical gash—richly labial but curved and wayward—where a vulva "is." Deep, like an S-curved valley, disturbing, uncanny, provocative: (t)his lady has had her bottom put on wrong. Like every nude, it is an interpreted depiction of sexual markers, only allusively or by cultural agreement read as "realistic." Like most but not all (male and female) nudes in the history of our art, this figure has no pubic hair, but that deficiency is more than made up by a witty collection of brushwood, or bound faggots with some dead leaves ("bachelors"?), on which this creature is poised as if on the edge of a cliff. Her legs, have I mentioned? are wide open. In the far background, as if at great airy distance, is a tinkling silvery "faery" waterfall, looks like it was made for desirous consumption of department store windows or popular appreciation of our patronizing understanding of others, as in dioramas dependent upon Western imperialism.[7]

red round ocarina
unspecified brown sweet
bird whistle thru the rote holes, air
purple petunia horns blew windsock-stiff.
Ate rose
hip jam
live from the jar
a door blue shut rush
dims coreopsis bright darks wrinkled rose
bristle quick rain a reine a wren.

Sub Rrosa n° 2: under what rose?

Held off, attracted—the energies of spectatorship attached to the energies of desire—the distancing barriers imprison the viewer in one spot; it is a form of visual bondage—the very limits are exciting. The form is not only implicitly heterosexual (or taken so by commentators, although no partner is present): but also sacrificial (a woman on a pyre), punitive (the mutilated body) and self-pleasuring (she holds the [phallic] lamp autonomously). "The viewer draws back from the door feeling that mixture of joy and guilt of one who has unearthed a secret. But what is the secret? What, in fact, has he [**] seen." One of Octavio Paz's answers, "we see ourselves looking," conceals the further question "who is looking?"—a puzzle that can no longer be postponed.[8] Since some "we" is not a confabulation of "he," how to see her contribution, her consternation, her con-tribulation, her conjugation as *the marked marker*?

For she *is* first he. All female readers are first "immasculated" argues Judith Fetterley; all learn to "read like men."[9] Which means a female socially constrained to perceive in so-called "genderless" ways themselves redolent of maleness, the ** constrained not to seek aspects of female difference, sounding untutored or simplistic if she diverges from the universal-which-

is-not-and-never-female. A woman first or expectedly adopts an "androcentric posture" before artwork. To read *as* a woman is to rupture this expected practice.

Duchamp's work here does not beg us to differ from the normal posture; in many ways its siting and dramatic situation (one peeps at a naked woman) reinforce an androcentric posture even as it is complicit with male powerlessness by registering the humiliating and vulnerable stance in some male seeking: an eye at the keyhole peering at a woman is not unambiguously coded as powerful; and with female powerlessness (this male eye, despite humiliations, claims power over an Other). That peeking eye needs an initiation or a pleasure which is always belated, to which it may be impotent. The voyeur is distanced from pleasures sought precisely in the maintenance of distance. The consistency of this position with completely naturalized ideologies of romantic longing is startling. Is the work then a direct re-enactment of such pleasures, or, in ways parallel to its grotesque segue over mimetic painting, is it a grotesque or ironic torsion of Romantic ideology? Spectatorship is impotence? And then what of the museum's multiplied insistence of spectatorship, of Duchamp's binding of the gaze? As John Berger has pointedly suggested, every woman is in a double relation of voyeur, she looks at herself being looked at and is powerless over the refracted gazing; here I look at myself looked at by Duchamp, reobserved by female me, and I am confused between my impotent distance as male voyeur and impotent identification as female voyeur.[10]

So I am the female reader, I am the "marked marker" I am she inside the outside the dividing barrier, I am the penising eye, and the missing I, bit of wiggy blond hair just visible to mark the missing head. I am the one who looks, I am she who cannot gaze, in reciprocity, back. In the situation here, he-is-me, and she-is-me. I am the subject speaking of all this and I am the object for the voyeur. How many mobile places can I be, a feminist tinker bell, marked by conventions of depiction that center me as "cunt" (why one is in front of me right now!). Yet if I read in too intransigent resistance, I risk blocking the very process of assimilation of such images, and may block, in bulk, understanding the discourses of "my" culture, and Duchamp's address to them.

Sub rosa, what do I feel and what do I see: I feel violé volé voilé, violated and robbed by the very veil of knowing unknowing which Duchamp places before an eye he has (apparently) assumed male. Le viol(in) d'anger. Then, faced by the fetish, my first holy response to "Art" makes me fragment and disenfranchise my anger. My second response of anger mixed with protective pity overrides the immasculated reading eye. Thereupon I feel pity, for myself depicted, for my strained and impotent anger. I feel pity for the image, a compassion, an identification, a happy

sorrow, and an arousal—of wonder? Wherefore this crystalline scene surrounding this piggish pink mass? Is she sleeping? is she hurt? is she wounded? is she coming? has she come? What or who has put her there? What has come from her? The distance—of the neo-nate. A scene—of birth? the birth of the eye? for the eye has been expelled, and the little pupil, forever distanced, returns bleating, lascivious, distorted with unfillable desires to the door of the mother. Is this what I want to produce: a reading saying: I am the female reader and I do not see the privileging of the "phallic" in this work. My eye is the eye of a similar; I refuse (can I refuse?) the position of voyeur; I identify; this figure is not the Other.

The pity—my sorrow and pity for the figure cast out, since inside has become outside. This figure is not in a boudoir, but outside in nature. When we look inside (the door) we blast through walls (there is no house, no room, no coded inside) until we are outside. We think (by the turn of the door) that we are looking IN something, but we are really looking from a room (in a museum) into exposure, into outside. It is laid away in a manger, one of those open front scenes staged with choice figurines, camels, kings, and cows, mother and imaginary father. Here all figurines are missing except the "babe." One imagines Duchamp musing the icons: a female nude? or some aspect of the Christ? In a secular age, where the female nude has become Christ—victimized, crucified, resurrected, restoring Eden with transfigured flesh—Christ Himself could not have been sufficiently Other. So he chose a Girl made Flesh. But iconic bits of manger scenes steal into this image: the barn door, the magical light of the spiritual lamp, the halo of waterfall, the rough "hay." Beyond the initial (question—does it really have priority?) immasculation, or in the struggle with it, the culturally unaccounted, unacknowledged fact of female spectators (**) has the power to disturb all elements of an art work, throwing established system of consumption, spectatorship, and interpretation into the most fruitful heterogeneity.

Sub Rrosa n° 3: nu? de Q

This is a piece just representational enough to remind us of the sensuous convention of robust pink-meaty nudes of innocence (Renoir, Rubens), and puzzling enough to recall the refined challenges of intellectually/sensually knowing nudes (Goya, Manet), and shocking enough to recall the torsion of almost unacceptable eroticism (Bronzino). So it is a pattern book of nudes, an excess of intertextual alliances are part of the shock of the work: one looks at its excrescent self and knows the whole museum falling on one's head.

That which has accidentally occurred to (say) the Venus de Milo has deliberately been enacted here, a strained coupage not less irrevocable from being in the eye of the beholder (dependent on the mandatory limited

position of the eye): does she have feet which are out of view? or no feet at all, no second arm, no face? The filmic "cut"; the "cut of physical coupure"; and the realized "gash" are in metonymic relation to each other. But this frightening text is conjoined with another banal, though erotic and gustatory set of discourses: the nude is "pretty as a picture" (as!); she "looks good enough to eat." She is also "flat as a pancake" resembling a cake or a sugar-coated almond. Again, these discourses of sexual mutilation and gustatory pleasure are contradictory, though one is placed before that place where the contradictions are fused, impacted: that place is the cultural site Woman.

We know Duchamp for his willingness to engage analytically but also furtively with cultural icons and with the systems of value and representation that stand behind them. He stands on the edge of enfolding systems and critical systems—between complicity and critique. This sincere duplicity may be (pace La Belle Halaine and other transvestite moments in Duchamp) his most female gesture, his most feminine "dress." He draws a moustache and beard on the Mona Lisa in a child-coded gesture of defacement. The transposition of a man's beard onto a woman's face toys with androgyny; the placement of a punning emblem of her pubic bottom on her face mocks the sacred icon by gloating over woman as perpetually sexualized. It also transposes the face of the painting into a male leer at the recognition which Duchamp's title proposes: a boyish French anagram, written as if as commonplace as INRI: "L.H.O.O.Q." = elle a chaud au cul = she has hot pants. The iconoclasm occurs at the expense of the female image, but while it is easy to dislodge Mona Lisa as a sacred cow, it is harder to dislodge woman as sacred cow while also constructing an altar. The title disembowels the duplicities of the visual gesture (towards androgyny and towards questioning the icons) with a masculinist reductiveness. The overall impact can be summarized with Sandra Harding's feminist distrust of androgyny in men: it is a skimming off of the feminine which leaves the social conditions of gender unchanged.[11] But notice, nonetheless, how Duchamp swirls among gender stances, stirring up the dust.

Now critics have noted that the erotic content of "Etant Donnés. . ." is "immediately apparent"[12] but by that they seem to mean only that the image is explicitly sexualized by genital exposure. One does not know, by looking, the nature of the eroticism, which lies in contextual realms of interpretation: is it arousing, disturbing, aphrodisiac, anaphrodisiac, teasing, violent, brutalizing, awestruck? Nor from whence eroticism emanates: simply from the open genitals read as sexual availability? from the mystery of exposed, inexplicably placed nakedness? from the spectator's distance? from the strange torsion? in the relations among this nude and the pulsing perpetual power of gas and water? in suggestions of defiling, raping, protecting, possessing, never possessing? Far from being assured, one

might with greater justice say: this work shows us we have no idea at all how we feel, know, understand eroticism, nor who "we" are when we comprehend it. One can only say: the artist has evoked sexuality and mystery simultaneously, and has written over, cut his trace into, an icon of the female, a manipulation, it suddenly becomes clear, that we agree to call art. Is "art" the defiling, arousing, iconizing of a female nude? Eroticism, as he said with an opaque elegance, was an important aesthetic "-ism."[13]

anagrams of C.N.T
.R.L.L cuntroll

or C.N.D.R.L.L Cinderella
where the fit in the slipper
issues: blood bumps
the dim swoops
of love-breathing (bird)
dim sum, doughy pork balls
yum
sweet fix the shiny threads by tone
I fit my clitty slit into my own slipper slot

Sub Rrosa n° 4: What are the "givens"?

Some people are fairly clear about what they see when they see it: "she opens her legs out towards the spectator with no false prurience or sense of shame."[14] Another phrase "the pudenda of the violated female figure"[15] suggests that what we witness is the aftermath of rape, while others suggest what we see is the throes of orgasm, but transposed to spiritual illumination.[16] Is it more like a doll, or a mannequin (if a mannequin could have a sex), one of those back page, small ad, life-sized dolls for masturbatory discharge. But it is, overall, more delicate than that.[17] And yet—it is a dreadful, even revolting, delicacy.

It is important not to flinch from this spot, to try to see the way these genitals "look."[18] And they are wayward: a fact reflected in the criticism only with projective words like rape or orgasm or shame. What do I mean, wayward? Just a patent element: this genitalia looks very strange, long, crooked, visually extended. That spot, made up in order from the abdomen down, is made of three distinct elements. First, there is a curved, long, empty fluvial slash asymmetrically placed in relation to a monstrous right thigh. Second, there is a puckered pink space, bowl shaped. Third, there is a little pink protuberance just visible behind one twig (a parodic envisioning of the total but coy coverage of a fig leaf). Duchamp has made a new kind of collage of genital materials. Each part of this collage alludes to body parts; each calls forth specific readings.

parentheses ( )		
peepholes o o	eye	pupil from pupilla
		little orphan girl
		analog. Gk: koré
cunt-mark		girl, pupil of the eye

The slashed S-curve is the most harrowing. It looks as if her bottom had been bitten through. Bitten as if the woman has been "castrated." Is "Etant Donnés. . ." the literalization of the (male) oedipal punishment visited upon a (female) image of (bisexual) oedipal desire for the mother? The work a symbolic map (du champ) of oedipalization? This train of thought gains some confirmation in relation to Duchamp's demonic version of "amor lohn" or the sexual paradox of the Keats "Ode"—cannot touch, cannot consummate—this being more powerful than consummation because it holds desire at its purest moment of yearning. But demonic because the lax, post-orgasmic position of Miss Donnés (miss given miss taken) suggests that before our penetrating gaze entered this strange little space, someone (now absent) already "had sex" with this nude. This impression is even somewhat necrophiliac, somewhat galatea-ic—with this "dead woman," with this "statue." And so the nude could sum up a major crossroads of sexual desire: the rebuff, the perpetual oedipal belatedness of any child (female or male) from any mother. Frustration, rebuff, belatedness—these the "delay in flesh" that make her (plausible? implausible?) satisfaction, or at least her sexual connivance have always already occurred. The piece is about the spectator's "delay."

This important genital consideration can be set in relation to one of the small works of sculpture ("Erotic Objects") contemporaneous with the assemblage. "Objet-dard" (1951): a snake, a penis, a soft but long bone, the pun on "hard on" / "art work" (thus "'Art on") / "dart, javelin" again offering the reflective play between the museum/the collection and sex and aggression. A conceptual word "d'ard" is made of the interspace among them. The Duchamp pudenda, seen in strained memory, can be imagined as the molded surface onto which this snaky Objet-dard could fit lengthwise. Duchamp invents a variant copulation, not by penetration, but by cogitation, figuring out all the different ways things could fit, could "be read."

The second allusion is contained in the little puckered spot—not visibly open, not at all like the vaginal opening. Indeed, the puckered anal opening is strongly suggested, and yet the spot is as pink and new as the anus of an infant. Thus the pastoral anus—bringing with it a whole set of utopian associations with the pleasures of artifice and the artifice of pleasures (the witty nerve of this is exactly the nerve of pastoral poems). The spot also strongly suggests the puckered knot of the navel. In one

economic icon, Duchamp has summarized non-reproductive and reproductive sexuality.

This third of the "Givens" recalls Duchamp's "Female Fig Leaf" ("Feuille de vigne femelle" [1950]) perhaps the strangest of these little objects—uniformly read as a cast of the female pudenda: *which it cannot visually be.* It looks to be a miniaturized version of a very small ass (tush, I want to say) with the crack between the buttocks curved and extruded. It looks like a small seat, or, more wildly, a knee rest for the tightly closed knees which are a synecdoche for chastity. If it is true that *"Female Fig Leaf* was modeled against the pudenda of the violated [sic] female figure of the *Etant Donnés. . ."*[19], Duchamp has substituted back for front in the same kind of tongue in cheek (another late Duchamp work) gesture as bearding the Mona Lisa in her den. He has opened the cunt to find the ass: the strategy of reversal, a cast from the back of the erotic crack reapplied to the front, still engages with a binary erotic system of "holes" or "spaces."

sweet ropes
fell down in stupor
slid parts a part
got clipped
together in
part.

The third allusion is the most radical. At the very end of this pudendal train, approximately where a (naturalized) anus would be, is popped an unmistakable protuberance, nonetheless just slightly effaced by the discreet twig in the foreground. It is a clitoris, though presented without its close friends, the labia, thus exposed and shorn of some of its pleasure.

Duchamp has, in this work, opened the vulva of the nude: it is a major critique of traditions of representation. (It may—I am not conversant with 20th century pornography—be an application of certain pornographic conventions to a "high art" piece.) He has opened her so that we can see what has always been missing: by its naturalized absence Duchamp calls attention to the clitoredectomy of all Western depictions of the female nude. For it has been decisively argued by Gayatri Spivak that the effacement of the clitoris is a major aspect of the cultural compacts of gender.[20] In his allusive use of the clitoris, Duchamp indeed puts "into some degree of disarray" the system WOME/AN.[21]

Duchamp shows a Steinean interest in the continuous allusive secession from systems of meaning. "One has to be on guard because, despite oneself, one can become invaded by things of the past. Without wanting to, one puts in some detail. There [in "The Bride"] it was a constant battle to make an exact and complete break."[22] Disfiguring. Disfigured (slashed, deformed, turned back side round, reversed) is one way of saying stop this fiction, stop the figural convention, alter it so that it is no longer useable.

But then Duchamp puts *in* some detail, a detail hardly before seen, and produces in this shocking artwork both the visual conventions of sentimentality and mutilation overlayered with a major reinterpretation of the genitals, a series of contradictory stories: castration at one end and clitoral presence at the other, pain and pleasure, non-reproductive and reproductive sexualities, "cruel" exposure and "critical" exploration.[25]

Is this major critique of the cultural conventions of representation compromised by Duchamp's gender position? To some great degree, this piece remains a work of high manipulation, effacing wholeness, the head and other humanistic markers; proposing a spectator-voyeur compelled to a certain kind of gaze. However, it remains provocative (though not to date a part of commentary) that the work stands in a critical relation to a central Western convention of representation, to a central part of the cultural compacts of gender. It does not efface the clitoral "detail."[24]

How can one have a language of image, theme, allusion, discourse without participating to that degree in the already given, the "étant donnés" of gender? The feminist question. Duchamp's genius: by bringing up certain discourses of sexuality in a lurid, exaggerated manner, by his fluted, flaunted genital collage, he has succeeded in making one uneasy, in destabilizing cultural agreements of female representation. Duchamp's detail is the virtually unspoken, undepicted detail. Etant donnés: the givens for Duchamp seem to exist in a kind of brutalizing contradiction. Etant donnés—This being the case, granted this, *then what follows?*

nude skeleton motor auto-mat hot knobs just say the word

runs to the bushes raspberry gathering "there are so many we even get tired of them, squash them with sugar, dribble them over ice cream we call it raspberry mush"

rose voracity
rose veracity

how can the rose speak? (so to speak)

Erato is one muse, lyric plus eros. I have errata.
I say: here are rosaceous errata, rub rrosa, the extra
excessive interpolated **r**
interrupting the general spell.

So to speak, rewrite the rose.

Sub rrosa

little bits
arouse

"infra-mince" changes
dandle the lost button.

—RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS

NOTES

[1] The occasion for this essay is the centennial retrospective, *A Propos of Duchamp, 1887-1987*, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Sept.-Dec. 1987. Useful commentary in Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine, eds., *Marcel Duchamp*, The Museum of Modern Art and The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973; Joseph Masheck, ed., *Marcel Duchamp in Perspective*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975; Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp: Appearance Stripped Bare*, Viking Press, 1978.

[2] In this piece, I am eliding the question how "Etant Donnés. . ." relates to other of Duchamp's artworks: his massive intertextuality with himself (so that doors, hinges, windows have told stories in his oeuvre as a whole; so that this piece evokes ready-mades), and the reasonable claim (by William Copley, Masheck, ed.) that this work summarizes motifs from his whole career.

[3] Generally in art books one has seen only a bland reproduction of the door, or reproductions of nude studies for "Etant Donnés. . . ," which have a very different character. In 1987, The Philadelphia Museum published a replica of Duchamp's *Manual of Instructions for "Etant Donnés. . ."* which contains a small reproduction. Important early commentary in Anne d'Harnoncourt and Walter Hopps, "'Etant Donnés. . .': Reflections on a New Work by Marcel Duchamp," *Bulletin of the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, LXIV, 299-300 (1969): 1-58.

[4] "Retinal" is a term used with a piercing probity by Duchamp to characterize precisely what he rejected, what he seceded from in art: painterly sensuousness considered as the most valid expression in the history of art. Early on (1913 with the first diagrammatic "Chocolate Grinder"), "I began to think I could avoid all contact with traditional pictorial painting." ". . .Too great an importance is given to the retinal. Since Courbet, it's been believed that painting is addressed to the retina. That was everyone's error. The retinal shudder! Before, painting had other functions: it could be religious, philosophical, moral." In Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (trans. Ron Padgett), The Viking Press, 1971, pp. 37, 43. The interviews were conducted in 1966.

[5] Sub Rosa: in secret, privately, confidentially. Latin, 'under the rose,' from the practice of hanging a rose over a meeting as a symbol of secrecy, from the legend that Cupid once gave Harpocrates, the god of silence, a rose to make him keep the secrets of Venus.

[6] There is an important argument in feminist film criticism on the gaze as male, and then an appreciative critique and brilliant tracing of ways beyond binary reversals by the same author. See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, 3 (Aut. 1975); and Mulvey, "Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience," *History Workshop* 23 (Sp. 1987).

[7] Aside from desperate rhetorical flourishes about genre, one might calmly say that the work situates itself among: an anthropological or zoological diorama, a stage set, a shop window, a sculpture, a pornographic peep show, an essay.

[8] Octavio Paz, p. 96. My sense of the agendas of the female reader has been enhanced by Patrocinio P. Schweickart, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading," in Schweickart and Elizabeth Flynn, eds., *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. Duchamp, too, made a bland but rich statement that the spectator "brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his [*] contribution to the creative act." "The Creative Act (1957)," in Robert Lebel, ed., *Marcel Duchamp*, Grove Press, 1959, p. 78.

[9] Fetterley's pioneering study is *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, Indiana University Press, 1978, p. xx. Fetterley would "exorcise" the male mind "implanted" in her (p. xxii); I find it more pertinent now (armed with the power of an already existing feminist criticism) to explore the dialectics of reading from the double position.

[10] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Viking Press, 1972, p. 46. Mary Ann Caws has eloquently posed this issue in an essay which was a strong inspiration for this one: "To talk, again, about complications: insofar as it is a question of women's bodies, the female onlooker is—willing or not, partially or wholly—identified with the body under observation and under the rule of art." "Ladies Shot and Painted: Female Embodiment in Surrealist Art," in Susan Sulieman, ed., *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 263.

[11] Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Cornell University Press, 1986, p. 145.

[12] As, d'Harnoncourt and Hopps, p. 21.

[13] Duchamp, in Cabanne, p. 88.

[14] John Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, The Viking Press, 1972, p. 96. Not only does Golding tell us how he feels; he remarkably tells us how "she" feels.

[15] Robert Pincus-Witten, "Theater of the Conceptual: Autobiography and Myth," in Masheck, ed., p. 164.

[16] Octavio Paz, pp. 158, 172.

[17] Some people imply that this is a one-man erotic fantasy: in the smug words of Masheck, "a senile hobby, altogether private in its psychological functions," p. 23, in ed. Masheck.

[18] This description is, naturally, not neutral; it is fully inflected with my position as a "marked marker".

[19] A reprise of Robert Pincus-Witten, in Masheck, p. 164.

[20] "The clitoris escapes reproductive framing. In legally defining woman as object of exchange, passage, or possession in terms of reproduction, it is not only the womb that is literally 'appropriated'; it is the clitoris as the signifier of the sexed subject that is

effaced." Later in the essay, Spivak points to "varieties of the effacement of the clitoris" in legal and political-economic definitions of women; it seems appropriate to extend this to cultural representations. "French Feminism in an International Frame," *Yale French Studies*62 (1981), p. 181. The essay is now collected in Spivak's *In Other Worlds*, Methuen, 1987.

[21] David Antin, "duchamp and language (1972)," in *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. d'Harnoncourt and McShine. "duchamps relation to art has been an endless series of stratagems stratagems involving complete systems that he puts into some degree of disarray," p. 101. "it is not a visual space its a conceptual space in which vision is a prop," p. 107.

[22] Cabanne, p. 38.

[23] It may be relevant to note that the triplex of allusions (vulval, anal, clitoral) is unique to this piece. None of the three studies in the Philadelphia exhibition has any clitoral indication.

[24] Naomi Schor wittily proposes that "the clitoris is coextensive with the detail. The clitoral school of feminist criticism might then be identified by its practice of a hermeneutics focused on the detail, which is to say on those details of the female anatomy which have been generally ignored by male critics and which significantly influence our reading of the texts in which they appear." "Female Paranoia: The Case for Psychoanalytic Feminist Criticism," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981), p. 216. Now collected in *Reading in Detail*, Methuen, 1987. My sense of the ** is that any kind of female reading will reopen what is seen, what is foregrounded, what priorities are assessed, and what is thought.

A LABOR OF "SONG'S EXACTION" *DREAMING CLOSE BY* BY RICK LONDON, *O BOOKS*, OAKLAND, CA, 1986

Where the dream material gathers it approximates a life and voice of its own, close to what you know yet closing in as you approach it, amassing distorted figures; so material, in the sense of densely present, it comes yet still to something other—at points evanescent. This is how you approach it: in the act of slow recognition. This is how it takes you: in the act of absorption. These are the effects of *Dreaming Close By*.

Often in the body of Rick London's work *the body* is felt to be violated, as from the effects of sickness, a long, hallucinatory sickness—a felt duration under duress. Pain is felt *close by* as an isolation of the body's parts floating curiously apart from each other—"a stomach unattached," "face, apart, sans future"—and the sounds and syntax of these poems draw this out ("body applied by a word / body emptied by word"); exaggerate it, not as melodrama or horror, but as a test of the realistic measure of things

drawn out in crisis to assume these disorienting shapes, suspended before your eyes. What you "cannot with ease abide" becomes more explicit because it comes to gradually, on hold. The ways in which the words sound and the lines break *bear* this out—

. . .her prone body by gravity
pulled to a shape he cannot with
ease abide

(the tongues exaggerated in size)

—here in the isolation of the line "ease abide," in the elongation of both words' sounds, in the choice of the formal "abide" to distance or withstand the distortions the body undergoes, and in the slant rhyme of "abide" with "size" to absorb the repercussions of this pain-bearing, and extend them. Consumed by sickness, the body takes its place beside you, unrecognizable, exaggerated out of place—as if you were dreaming it.

There is a resonant economy to London's poems which is marked by this hesitation to fix things in place:

moving the thin face of it, can't place when she
quits her breath. . .

. . . .her
face then where

and a desire to track the signs that emerge from this displacement:

.where as people

are signs a

place throws

(up)

The poems become multi-directional signs—moving close by, veering away, rising, falling—of a floating world in which even gravity is inverted

("the community of hesitations the inversions all float together"), and the perceptions of a disembodied consciousness lift into the air—looking over you, breathing ghostly measures:

> . . .figure via fix of air
>
> smells especially from
>
> her mouth figure breeding doubt floating alone yes
> there is a ghost but not to satisfy your questions. . .

At the same time the "dreaming" in this book very much *embodies* or is connected to the figures and objects around it, and it is the book's writing that must necessarily bind them to the world, even after the dream lets them go. The smallest gestures of speech—like a parenthetical "the"—assume capital implications, and they generate an ambivalent twofold view of things in the world put in place, then displaced. Reading the article in the beginning of the title poem, "Dreaming Close By," creates a different (contrary) effect and perspective than shutting it out:

> seated figure of
>
> age (the)
>
> chair stationary (the)
>
> figure rocking into
>
> air shedding as
>
> she gathers. . .

Articulated, the article becomes gravitational—keeping things down. Left silent within parentheses, it makes *the* room with figures and chairs *room* or space enough into which things are suspended, including the room and the light which brings it up:

> light original to (the) room brings it up

The concentrated, grounded sense of things which are pulled or emptied, levitated or released or ripped from their sources—what keeps them down—is applied with an exhausting, visceral intensity across the final poem of the book, "Untitled Piece." This piece is one of the most unnerving, densely wrought and engaging works I have recently *voiced,* and I say voiced knowingly, because it will literally change how you read. Reading it, you become subject to (and of) the extremes of an exacting lyricism in which the smallest clusters of sound are foregrounded. Words, like bodies, are violated, but the violence which severs them is continuously shifted and undercut and stretched from line to line before the voice has a chance to articulate them wholly in place—to recognize them. It is almost impossible to quote these one page blocks partially, but even an isolated excerpt will give you some kind of provisional hearing:

> . . . .ripped and s
> tone, emits a sever of gro
> und, extruded rightfully e
> xpelled, a stretch of gr
> ound

The sounds here come out of pain—exaggerated, racked. Suspended at the end of a line as one sound (and with that sound emerges the meaning you associate with it), a word assumes another value and character at the start of the next line. The voice emits "gro" as "groan" before coming to "gro/und", as if that's where the sound rose from—a severed ground. The voice presses out a hard "e" and stretches it, then shifts to relieve the pressure in the softened "xpelled". The disbelief and relief of pain are hung on the same letter, different phonemes. In the following, one wants to say "o" in disbelief, and concludes by muting the exclamation, relieving it with "or" and "of" (It is curious how the dominant phoneme in this piece—and perhaps in the whole book—is "o", since it makes for a fortuitous conjunction and correspondence with the name of the book's publisher, Leslie Scalapino's *O Books*.):

> can't believe it o
> r relieve it sort o
> f see it over ther
> e
>
> the entrails going
> out

I should say that these are not empty, lettristic gestures or experimental practices unrealized in the world; just the opposite. They very much engage, to the letter, the conditions a subject endures through a rapt attention to the body's breathing in and out of pain, "its specific distortions" singing into the world—the body emptying into the world:

> . . . .where-as the anim
> al small and viscous sung into (th
> e) world. and the animal: 'you kn
> ow my name,' empty name

> . . .or song without eyes at all
> sings one out

These are broken words, broken bodies, thrown into the world, hung there, delayed before (and beyond) recognition, before you come to know them whole:

> as with the missing figure, cloth bandaged,
> or hidden gesture, broken mass or abdom
> inal without eyes at all, delayed, empties t
> hing sings one out

Dreaming Close By is, to quote Zukofsky in *"A" 9*, a labor of "song's exaction"—a music you wait in, suspended, before it absorbs you.

—BENJAMIN HOLLANDER

THE GUEST: SECOND THOUGHTS ON TRANSLATING HÖLDERLIN

By second thoughts, I mean that particular mode of revisionary, retrospective reflection akin to what the French call *l'esprit de l'escalier*. I.e. the withering repartee that suddenly leaps to mind as you find yourself on the stairway, making your exit from some social gathering where, just a few minutes before, to your utter discomfiture and humiliation, you had proved

miserably unable to devise an appropriate comeback to some witty conversational challenge, but instead had just stood there, taken aback, tongue-tied and publicly exposed, as it were, as incapable of rising to the linguistic or dialectical occasion at hand. Now, as you retreat from the scene of your defeat and make your way up the privacy of the darkened stairs, you are suddenly illuminated with hindsight. A miraculous flush of fluency suddenly overwhelms you as you come to realize, in delayed epiphany, what it was you should have said back there and then. But of course the words have come too *late*. You can't go back and rectify your failure. All you can do is mull your way home, replaying the incident over and over in freeze frame or slow motion.

I offer this as a metaphor for one of the most disquieting episodes in the life of the translator—the moment at which he or she queasily thinks back on an encounter that, in retrospect, seems to cry out for revision or rectification, and yet whose deficiencies, now graven on the public printed page, lie there for all and sundry to inspect and dissect. How few of us, as translators, are ever given to a second chance to correct all the errors that seem to multiply in hindsight—the typos, the dropped lines, the *mot* that still refuses to be *juste*, the downright misreadings, the infelicities of rhythm or phrase? How few of us, given the Darwinian economics of publishing, are ever allowed the luxury of revised editions of our efforts? With a few, very rare exceptions, we translators tend to be stuck with our shortcomings. Once published, our versions become in an odd sense *irreversible*. What was initially apprehended as a series of provisional decisions has now strangely acquired the status of something definitive. Or to put it in slightly different terms: what was originally experienced as a *verb*—that is, as an ongoing activity or process or dialogue or encounter or event—has now been transformed into a *noun*—a reified text or object that sits there on the page, facing both its original and its translator like some ironic stillbirth or abortion.

It may be that I am simply evoking the post-partem melancholia that afflicts any author—the euphoria of gestatory expectation giving way to the despondency that attends one's awareness of the sheer irrevocability of the small, helpless textual thing that has thus finally emerged. But I think that the situation I am describing—and I am basing it on my own second thoughts about translating Hölderlin's late Hymns and Fragments—involves a *tristitia* peculiar to translators: given the inevitably "secondary" or "derivative" nature of their enterprise (if one wanted another obstetric metaphor, one might say that a translation is merely an "afterbirth" of the original), the awareness they engage in is always belated, always provisional, always contingent. To me at least, the most interesting translations (among which Hölderlin's Sophocles or Pindar) are not those that fix or ground their originals, but that somehow manage to leave them "up in the

air," to suspend them, as it were, for that precarious and precious instant in which original and translation miraculously collide and come asunder, converge and take on distance—I am deliberately borrowing this figure of unstable encounter from Hölderlin's own meditations on the paradoxical measure (or *Maass)* that defines the space in which the human and the divine are simultaneously conjoined and divorced: "Nah ist, / Und schwer zu fassen." Near and / Hard to grasp. In "The Task of the Translator" Walter Benjamin explores a similar figure in his celebrated simile of the tangent: "Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, with this touch rather than with the point setting the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity, a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense *[Sinn],* thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux."

Benjamin's image of translation as a vector that tangentially grazes the "sense" of the original only to pursue its own independent course brings me to another area of post-mortem reflection. If, on the one hand, I have been describing the kind of retrospective alienation a translator might feel vis-a-vis his all-too-finished-product—a kind of nostalgia for that period of innocence when everything still seemed virtual, when nothing was yet "definitive," when every decision was still open to revision, in short, a period in which the very *process* of translation, of discovery, of experiment seemed to matter far more than its eventual completion (in my case this lasted some seven years)—on the other hand, I also now find myself reacting in exactly the opposite fashion, that is, I look back on what I have done and, far from seeing it as irrevocably fixed in some final printed form, I watch it unravel in front of my very eyes. I supposed if one wanted metaphors for these two complimentary predicaments, in the former case the translator finds himself in the position of Lot's wife: to look back is to experience petrifaction, immobilization, the living tissue of the text now reads in retrospect like so much dead letter. But in the latter case, the experience more resembles that of Orpheus: you look back only to discover that your loving translation has vanished. And in its place—uncannily—now stands the original.

Let me explain. Anyone who has engaged in translation has probably experienced that particular phase of the process (it is one of the stages in what George Steiner terms "The Hermeneutic Motion") in which one's translation seems to have more or less completely "covered" the original. I use the term "cover" here in a number of senses, all involving various implications of protection, concealment, and mastery. One displays one's mastery of a subject or field by covering it. Stallion masters mare as he covers her. Text covers text in a palimpsest. A book in turn may or may not be told by its cover. To cover for someone is to substitute one's presence

for their absence or act as an accomplice in dissimulation. In rock 'n roll parlance, a cover is a recording made by one performer or aimed at one market of a tune originally recorded by a different performer and aimed at a different market (as in say, a Rolling Stones white "cover" of an earlier black Chuck Berry hit). All of which I think very nicely covers a number of different dimensions of translation. To return to my own personal encounter with Hölderlin's late Hymns and Fragments, I felt as I completed my translation (but is a translation ever "complete"?) that I had more or less succeeded in covering the texts I had chosen (or that had chosen me). Indeed, so absorbed was I in getting my version just right that in the end I could no longer see or hear the original: Hölderlin's German had been completely obscured, blocked out, covered by the English that I had so labored to out in its place. The translator as Narcissus, is so entranced by the reflection he has crafted that he remains blissfully oblivious to the beckonings of Echo.

Little by little, however, after the initial exhilaration of publication had passed and I returned to what I had done (whether in classroom teaching of Hölderlin or in private rereading), a strange and marvelous thing began to happen. The originals that I had so triumphantly thought I had covered or laid to rest now began to stir into life again—and so insistently that they seemed to be gradually erasing or obscuring the versions I had created in their stead. Or, more precisely (and this is one of the virtues and perils of an *en face* edition), the originals were once again reasserting their place *alongside* my translations to such an extent that the light emitted by Hölderlin's German on the left page was now blinding my parallel English versions on the right. Or, to use a slightly different metaphor, it was as if the original, now come back to life, had returned to haunt the translation like some uncanny *revenant* or Doppelgänger. A psychoanalysis of translation might well conclude that the situation I am here evoking involves a kind of return of the repressed, a salutary reminder that the original (especially an original of the power of Hölderlin) can be only mastered or surmounted *à ses propres risques et périls*. Hölderlin's own translations of Pindar and Sophocles are perhaps the most eloquent examples we have of such tragic hubris: reaching out to appropriate the fire of Hellas, he gets burned in the process, and yet it is precisely the intensity of this conflagration that accounts for the dark, charred radiance of his versions. As he writes in one of his late fragments: "Verwegner! möchst von Angesicht zu Angesicht / Die Seele sehn / Du gehest in Flammen unter." Reckless! wanting to see the soul / Face to face / You go down in flames.

I certainly do not want to give the impression I am comparing my own experience as a translator to Hölderlin's—that would be grotesquely hubristic. I am merely trying to explore the basic provisionality or instability of the relation between original and translation by underscoring how, in

my case at least, Hölderlin's text seemed to recoup itself, to uncover itself (Heideggerian *aletheia?)* only *after* having been silenced or occluded by my translation. In other words, although I had initially set out with the intent of rendering Hölderlin's late work more "accessible" to the English-speaking reader, this enterprise had paradoxically blocked my own access to the originals. Only in hindsight, only in retrospective distance, only by having watched my own translations fall apart and fade in the face of the original could I now begin to read (or reread) Hölderlin's German afresh. Without wanting to overly Hegelianize it, I suppose the model of translation I am describing here is closely linked to the metaphors of sacrifice that inform so much of Hölderlin's own work: the original is sacrificed (or cancelled or "sublated") in the translation, just as the translation is in turn sacrificed back to the original so that the latter, now renewed and transformed, may continue on its course.

Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" (which is in itself a "translation" of Hölderlin) speaks of the process in terms of the essential historicity of literary works—their *Fortleben* or *Ueberleben* or *Nachleben,* that is, the way in which works of the past, despite (or precisely because of) the fact that they are no more, continue to survive or pursue an afterlife. Translations, Benjamin argues, are the crucial vehicles of this posthumous survival, for in them "the life of the originals attains its ever-renewed latest and most abundant unfolding *[Entfaltung]."* "In its afterlife *[Fortleben]",* Benjamin continues, "the original undergoes a change. Even words with fixed meaning can undergo a maturing process [Benjamin's term here—*Nachreife*—also evokes over-ripening or decomposition]. What once sounded fresh may later come to sound hackneyed; what was once modern may someday sound archaic." In short, Benjamin insists that the original is in no way *fixed;* as it moves through the various avatars of its afterlife, it is subject to any number of ramifications. And the same holds true of translations. Benjamin notes: "While a poet's words endure in his own language, even the greatest translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and destined to be absorbed by its renewal [Benjamin's German here plays on the verbs *eingehen* and *untergehen:* a translation both *goes in* to its own language and *goes under* in it]. Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original and the birthpangs [or deathpangs] of its own." That is, not only does translation as "afterlife" reveal the death or decomposition (or deconstruction) of the original, but it also watches over its own inevitable demise, mournfully aware that its encounter with the original can never be definitive.

Benjamin underlines the liability that characterizes the life (or afterlife) of both the original and its translations. If the original is conceived as a

historical process moving through time, the translation in turn becomes merely a momentary point of convergence along this posthumous vector, a point that will soon be left behind in the dust—just as Hölderlin's German has now passed through my English with a jolt to pursue its slightly deflected course into future readings, future versions. Benjamin's profoundly temporal or historical approach to translation makes him, I believe, the first theorist of translation to break with the dominant tradition of viewing translations as having an essentially *metaphorical* relation to their originals—that is, as being somehow analogous or similar or equivalent to their originals. True, he rhetorically deploys metaphors throughout his essay, but only in order to insist that translation is something very different from the theory or practice of imitation. Translation, he argues, should not be confused with such concepts as similarity, substitutability, copying or reproduction *[Wiedergabe]*—all species of metaphor. Instead, the figures he privileges are *synecdoche* (i.e. a translation is "part" of the ongoing afterlife of the original) or *metonymy* (i.e. a translation is an effect whose cause is the original, or, in slightly different terms, a translation exists as a continuous extension of or supplement *[Erganzung]* to the original). For Benjamin, the privileged form of this metonymic adjacency is the targum or interlinear version of the Scriptures, the translation that does not so much resemble its original as lie in between its lines, both languages dovetailed together as the fractured parts of some greater "pure Language" *[reine Sprache]*—the two broken shards of a *symbolon* momentarily brought together as a sign of shared promise or contract.

Benjamin rejects the traditional view of translation as a mode of representation, reproduction or mimesis in favor of a more "figural" approach (hence his attractiveness to such theorists as de Man and Derrida). Despite his apparent espousal of radical literalism or *Wortlichkeit* ("For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade"), Benjamin by no means recommends this "worldliness" on the grounds that it permits a greater resemblance or equivalence between translation and original, but rather because it allows both to enter into a *relation* or participate in an *exchange* that, ideally, will serve to liberate the space (or Language) that lies in between the two—much as Mallarmé insists that it is the blanks, the intervals, the margins, the silences that constitute the true armature of a poem.

As I now look back on my translations of Hölderlin, it is above all the space *between* my English and his German that occupies me. If I take up the published book, it is no longer the right-hand page that automatically draws my eye, but rather the entire space to the left of it—the intervening whiteness between the *en face* texts, and, further to the left, of course, Hölderlin's originals in which, from time to time, I can occasionally see the faint traces of my own words reaching through the palimpsest. I suppose

I originally undertook my versions in the naive belief that some metaphorical condition of resemblance might emerge: I was going to produce texts that would somehow read "like" Hölderlin to the American eye and ear. In hindsight, however, I now realize that something altogether different was really at issue all the while: to offer temporary hospitality to Hölderlin's errant original, to have it over as a guest for a while, to experience the communion of simple adjacency, one language sharing a moment of silence with another. Oddly enough, this was the subject of the very first Hölderlin fragment I ever translated, the fragment that led me to undertake the entire enterprise in the first place. Only now in retrospect, filled with second thoughts, am I beginning to grasp the point it makes about translation:

Bauen möcht
I want to build

und neu errichten
and raise anew
das Theseus Tempel und die Standien
the temples of Theseus and the stadiums
und wo Perikles gewohnet
and where Pericles lived

Es fehlet aber das Geld, denn zu viel
But there's no money, too much
is ausgegeben heute. Zu Gaste nemlich hatt
spent today. I had a guest
ich geladen und wir sassen beienander
over and we sat together

—RICHARD SIEBURTH

SOUNDS FROM THE MASK

In *Lethal Speech* Roy Wagner illustrates the tropic tendency of the Daribi—of Papua New Guinea for whom pigs are the archetypal food animal—by recounting this adage: "a goat is not a very good pig; the best pig is a cow." The propositional form of this construction is not so alien to our own styles of assessment. In that mythmaking mode of narrative known as music history, the "best" is generically rewritten as "first" in order to

anchor the chronicle to its edenic motherlode. So, by making rock's *first* best pig an Elvis and swings *first* a Goodman, and jazz's *first best pig* the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, what is concealed is the labor process whereby some entrepreneurial Tom Sawyer whitewashes, and renews the lease, on a fence.

Quite aside from residual tropological debris, storytelling and history-writing are cluttered with latent ideological detritus, like toxic deposits left long ago and only lately emitting their radioactive deformations. This is nowhere more evident than in the business of writing modern music as history, with its axiomatic variable, "the best pig is a cow." In other words, a simple tropic assertion is made to function with the inelastic finality of a law, the self-evidence of a syllogism.

The "jazz age" was implanted in the public mind as a term for contemporary styles of hedonism in 1922, largely on the strength of Fitzgerald's collection *Tales of the Jazz Age* (originally to have been called *Flappers and Philosophers* until its author perceived "jazz" as a more durable word than "flappers"). In a 1931 elegy for the period, "Echoes of the Jazz Age," Fitzgerald noted that "The word jazz in it progress toward respectability has first meant sex, then dancing, then music. It is associated with a state of nervous stimulation, not unlike that of big cities behind the lines of a war." Nervousness was the archetypal 19th century American malady (George Beard's 1881 *American Nervousness* was the popular equivalent to our various manuals on stock market flutters, sexual inadequacy, unsolved murders, etc.). Fitzgerald's revival of the term addresses the ailments of a specific social stratum. J. Hartley Manners' 1922 play *The National Anthem* depicted white middle-class youth "jazzing" its way to degeneracy. But the upper classes were not immune either. John Hammond (the legendary talent scout who "discovered" Basie, Billie Holiday, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen in his long career—and who died recently, reportedly during a last audition of Billie Holiday singing "All of Me") found jazz the perfect antidote to the constraints of his Vanderbilt upbringing. Barry Ulanov went so far as to accuse Hammond and his ilk of wanting the music "to flagellate their sense of propriety." The crisis of musical identity was actually felt by Yankee bluebloods in the years roughly coinciding with the rise of jazz. As MacDonald Stanton Moore strikingly portrays in *Yankee Blues* (Indiana University Press), cultural self-appraisal meant not only producing estimable American concert composers, but learning to swallow without protest the bitter new styles of reigning European masters such as Debussy, Ravel, and Strauss. As Moore puts it, American audiences were "increasingly eager not to be offended." But what was most offensive for many was the fact that these same Europeans—trend-setters of the highbrow artworld—were wild about jazz, even to the point of acclaiming it the preeminent New World contribution to music.

Since the nation's late 19th century assumption of full-partner status in world domination, the most awkward aspect of self-image was that of cultural deficit. Official art was borrowed, and official artists were in the import/export trade. European educational trips were mandatory, and in the end American "modernism" was the ultimate reenactment of founding principles: a European *life* was the prerequisite for an American art. Ezra Pound can be seen—in proper economic light—as trying to pay off the interest on a huge cultural debt. Jazz was evidently a 'folk' art or entertainment, and until his triumphant 1933 trip to England, Duke Ellington thought so as well. "Maybe our music does mean something," he was to say in a much-quoted reflection after returning home. The bricollage pluralism of folk musics—specifically and most adroitly blended into jazz ("with the ruthlessness," Ralph Ellison wrote, "of those without articulate investments in cultural styles")—constitute the most distinctive American fabrication of a non-indentured art. As if the history of actual slavery had freed some from the burden of a hypothetical debt to unseen masters abroad. The spiritual heritage of the U.S. is black, and it is musical, or as Ellison insists: "the most authoritative rendering of America in music is that of American Negroes." Cultural emancipation in America is directly related to the literal historical disfigurations of enslavement (and I mean here not only bondage of blacks, but the fact that white colonists also felt enslaved by European law). The real Manifesto of Modernism in American arts, at any rate, would have Sidney Bechet as a signator; as he put it, speaking of the challenge to his people of emancipation:

> . . .it was like they were trying to find out in this music what it was they were supposed to do with this freedom: playing the music and listening to it—waiting for it to express what they needed to learn, once they had learned it wasn't just white people the music had to reach, nor even their own people, but straight out to life and to what a man does with his life when it finally *is* his. (quoted in Frederick Turner, *Remembering Song*, p. 35)

This is also the burden of unspoken history that the invisible man learns from the old woman in the prologue to Ellison's novel: "'Old woman, what is this freedom you love so well?'. . .'I done forgot, son. It's all mixed up. First I thinks it's one thing, then I think it's another. It gits my head to spinning. I guess now it ain't nothing but knowing how to say what I got up in my head. But it's a hard job, son. Too much is done happen to me in too short a time.'" *(Invisible Man,* p. 11) This is the spectacle of a person—metonym for an entire race—left ***punchdrunk*** by an abusive history, staggered by the accelerated thrust of ideological afterburners.

While there is a legacy of violence behind the blues, behind jazz, it's the peculiar insight of Jacques Attali in his book *Noise: The Political*

Economy of Music (University of Minnesota Press) to have taken on all musical forms as submersed in a politics of noise-control in which violence is as invariable a threshold as war is to international diplomacy. Where visual art can be ignored by averting the gaze, music goes right to the balance stabilizers of the middle ear, provoking disorientation or even fear. "The game of music," he writes, "resembles the game of power: monopolize the right to violence; provoke anxiety and then provide a feeling of security; provoke disorder and then propose order; create a problem in order to solve it." (28) They're not identical: it's a *resemblance* Attali proposes. But it's close enough for him to assert that music, as the "organization of noise," is nothing less than a radical theoretical form. (4) "Listening to music is listening to all noise, realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political. . . Therefore, any theory of power today must include a theory of the localization of noise and its endowment with form." (6)

One of the reasons, I think, for the legendary status of figures like Bird and Trane, is that they made it patently evident that music can be a radical theory *in its practice,* a means of engaging historical/political tonics and dominants by (in almost that classic marine Corps militaristic yodel) *sounding off.* If modern music in general has illustrated an ongoing courtship with noise—from twelve-tone to atonal to aleatory procedures—then jazz is evidently that musical idiom already historicized as "noisy," or hailing from the racially derogated equivalent of noise in information theory.

In Attali's scheme, the sacrificial heritage of music is supplanted in the 19th century by music as representation (the harmonic registration of a cohesive social order) and, in the 20th century, by repetition, or the stockpiling of privatized sensations and preferences, the simulation of sociality in a structure that erases social difference by propagating an eternal return of the same. The ideal repetition is noise-free information (this is behind the current CD revolution, and is the battle-cry of all innovations in recording technology). Attali characterizes representation, on the other hand, as the communication of energy (appropriate to the 19th century discovery of the laws of thermodynamics and the installation of the massive energy-consuming machines of corporate industrialism). What's overlooked in his schematic of periodization is the continued relevance of energy in music. While it is certainly the case that the euphoric alpha-rhythm products that Windham Hill and ECM are typical of our current thirst for noise-free music, jazz has never strayed far from either the 'antiquated' mode of production of harnessed energy, nor from that futurity projected by Attali which he calls "composing. . .[or] inventing the message at the same time as the language."[1] This is of course what Murray Schafer's World Soundscape Project has documented while illustrating some pertinent

principles: all music is situated in a soundscape, and all human soundscapes are socially variable assessments and regulation of noise.

To retain the term "noise" from Attali's project is necessary for two reasons. First, *noise* is a technical term that has the status in information theory (the dominant model of communications in contemporary stagings of discourse environments) of the outside, the inessential, the undesirable, the intrusive excess. In other words it's a term that immediately historicizes otherwise abstract concepts, when transferred from information-theory to music (digital recording is the sonic boom of this migration). Secondly, "noise" as a less rigorous term is a challenge to the neutrality of the concept of "sound." Every humanly propagated sound is evidence, to some auditor, of a volatile otherness. "Noise" is the ideology that intercedes, making a judgment of mere inclination or simple disaffection. Take for instance this, from the *New York Times,* March 30, 1930: "Before M. Chevalier appears on the second half of the program, Duke Ellington, the djinn of din, and his colored Cotton Club Orchestra, devote an hour to elaborate devices for making noise."[2] *The Jazz Singer* was still drawing huge audiences at the movie palaces.

The first sound film is no longer memorable for its sound but for the more frequently imprinted visual scrape-and-bow pose of Al Jolson in blackface, renewing the lease on the minstrel plantation. A judicious assessment of modern American music would have to conclude that white masquerading as black is a dominant style.[3] And now, with Houston Baker's *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press) we have a masterful demonstration of the theoretical resources involved in considering the whole issue of mask and masquerade. While only a hundred pages in length, Baker's book is conceptually enormous, and a model of concision.

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[1] This isn't far at all from Murray Schafer's appeal, in *The Tuning of the World,* "to regard the soundscape of the world as a huge musical composition. . .[in which] we are simultaneously its audience, its performers and its composers." (205) Attali forgets the essential component of the listener in his musical sociology, being as he is so focused on music as a mode of social production. By imagining his utopic phase as "composing" he envisions a computer-based multi-instrumental proficiency, while unwittingly cutting away the ground for recognizing *alerted listening* as the ground of social action.

[2] Is it possible that the anonymous reviewer may have gotten wind of Luigi Russollo and his "Art of Noise"? Might the phrase "elaborate devices for making noise" gesture toward Russollo's "intonarumori" or noise-intoners which he summoned into existence as "a new ensemble of instruments"?

[3] And it may be trying to break free even of that supposed fetter—given the panoptic display that wowed the crowd at the Hollywood Bowl, July 1986, at the Playboy Jazz Festival. During an exemplary set by David Murray's quartet, the high point for the crowd was the release of a cascade of balloons—evidence that the simple containment of air in sealed

The minstrel mask is, above all (("above all"!)) a white application. But with telling consequences, for "the *sound* emanating from the mask reverberates through a white discursive universe as the sound of the Negro." (22) So strong was this tradition that by the 1920s the visual mask could be dropped as Amos 'n' Andy produced the same theatrical effects by sound alone on radio. Blackface is a minstrel style of the stage, theatrically delineating perspectival space for the entire society. Baker's first empowering insight is that society itself is *staged* as a minstrel-effect, and that the providential moment of Afro-American modernism is there in Booker T. Washington's donning of the mask so as to produce "reassuring sounds from the black quarters." The point is not that Washington was playing into racist configurations, but playing *with* them, and that "mastery of the minstrel mask by blacks. . .constitutes a primary move in Afro-American modernism." (17) Precisely because the minstrel mask is a vestige of a performative tradition it enabled uncanny minds like Washington's to engage its theatrical spectre. Playing on the title *Up from Slavery,* Baker speculates that in black culture "the anxiety of modernistic influence is produced. . .by the black spokesperson's necessary task of employing audible extant forms in ways that move clearly *up*, masterfully and resoundingly away from slavery." (101) The useful precedent, in other words, is in distinguishing between the mask and the sounds it produces. Blacks (already in blackface, as it were) could concentrate on the *sound* of the mask, recuperating it as a medium of expression suitable to themselves. This is what Baker calls "mastery of form"—a legacy born by subtly and determinedly eliminating the ventriloquism that had always been part of the mask. The master of form floats like a butterfly, but stings like a bee. (50)[4]

Baker's study is also intriguing for its concentrated silence on the issue of music. Music is *the* primary area of the mastery of form in Afro-American art. It's a practice that continues as a central asset to the tradition, considering for instance Cecil Taylor's prodigious conservatory technique as it has been applied for thirty years to reasserting an audible black discourse as latent in this instrument marked by black and white keys. The

rubber can be more enthralling than music of the highest order. The most audacious display of audience delirium was reserved for pop altoist Kenny G., the musical equivalent of Wonderbread (everybody out of their seats and grooving to the multicolored balloons on the package). Sure enough, the bread was processed, denutritionalized *white*—a key word here. After an extended doodle on his saxophone, Kenny G. actually had the bad taste to say "See, white guys can play too!" which drew *the* most ecstatic roar from the crowd all weekend.

[4] This replication of Muhammad Ali's famous principle goes uncited by Baker, and illustrates how richly he has occupied with his text—rather than being *pre*occupied *within* it—a field of rhetorical topoi. He has particularly engaged Ralph Ellison's work in the sotto voce of an enviably ventriloqual masquerade.

minstrel mask, like the piano keyboard, functions as an ideological regulator. Both are mnemonic ritual objects (as Baker says of the mask) which organize and predispose certain patterns of sounds. In the "psychodrama of the minstrel mask" the actual sounds of those whose lives are represented are displaced by "nonsense, misappropriation, or mishearing." (18)

> Obviously, an Afro-American spokesperson who wished to engage in a masterful and empowering play within the minstrel spirit house needed the uncanny ability to manipulate bizarre phonic legacies. For he or she had the task of transforming the mask and its sounds into negotiable discursive currency. In effect, the task was the production of a manual of black speaking, a book of speaking *back and black.* (24)

"Bizarre phonic legacies" are certainly part of the jazz tradition also, considering its instrumental origins in the marching band (next time you see such an outfit take the field at halftime, ponder the fact that this is the tradition that the dominant white culture has forged with these instruments, then consider the contrasting jazz use of the same resources).

So persuasive are both the mask and the keyboard—so "natural" have they come to sound—that the great project of an Afro-American modernism is a technical redress of the basics, starting with speech and the rudimentary sounds that link it with music in a shared motivation to be heard. Talking back and talking black is not so much an act of defiance as a necessary rejoinder in an already ongoing dialogue. But this dialogue, originating in slavery and its enormous disproportion of power, afflicts the stability of the basic interactive communicative exchange which social intercourse presumes. And dialogue has no chance when one of the interlocutors is *heard* as nonsensical (or as speaking "nonstandard English"). Through the screening agency of the minstrel mask, real people are made to appear monstrous and deformed.

Baker shrewdly composes his thesis in different registers—a sort of prose chord system—and one of his most ingenious moves is to suggest a further stage of Afro-American modernism, complementary to the mastery of form: "deformation of mastery," or a "gorilla literacy." (51) Gorilla is here a sign of territorial mastery: challenged gorillas exaggerate and telegraph their "hoots of assurance" as the "sounds of protective display." (55) Baker adds to these marked simians another figure, sounded the same but spelled *guerrilla,* for which there is the tradition of "maroonage" to draw on. "Maroon" societies were groups of escaped slaves who lived with a nomadic proficiency, organizing themselves militarily as marauders and as Baker proudly and repeatedly emphasizes, "often communicating by horns." (77) Baker is at this point displaying a mastery

in distinct theoretical registers that recalls Rahsaan Roland Kirk's multi-reed euphorics. And he has one last key modulation in his play on the term *possession*.

The single most pertinent factor facing early 20th century Afro-American writers: "What exists on the antecedent side of black modernism is not a line of stodgy, querulous, and resistant premoderns but a universe of enslavement." (101) This obvious point, in Baker's book, is made to resonate disparate faculties of sense; there is the economic function in which slavery means to be possessed, to be another's possession. But there is also the gripping spiritual dynamic of trance states such as voodoo or indigenous rural Christianity in which people are *possessed*. In a mordant pun, "Black writers, one might say, are always on *display*. . ."(56) What is displayed in the end—often against a heavily stacked deck—is a ritual of self-possession, or being ready to take on all comers. (Bird as a one-man ghost dance religion unto himself.) The legendary cutting-sessions that are the undocumented (i.e. unrecorded) center of jazz history are the essential sounds of protective display, the hoots of assurance of *maroon* societies communicating, literally, by horn. In the world of after-hours clubs and backrooms, the "mastery of form" was the prelude, the necessary prerequisite, to the "deformation of mastery" by which a Lester Young could make a tenor sax sound like an altogether different instrument than that played by Coleman Hawkins. As Jacques Attali puts it, this is a simulacrum of sacrifice by channeling noise—and noise is a weapon domesticated and ritualized by music.

In Baker's terms it's apparent that Louis Armstrong was the first and most distinguishable musical herald of the mastery of form. His antics and mugging pay dues to the minstrel mask, while his horn speaks with unmistakable mastery. But it's hard to think of any other jazz figures who take on the mask with such alacrity, or even make gestures in the minstrel domain (Cab Calloway comes to mind, but he was not an instrumentalist). Ralph Ellison made a case for Charlie Parker as Armstrong's successor:

> The pathos of his [Bird's] life lies in the ironic reversal through which his struggles to escape what in Armstrong is basically a *make-believe* role of clown—which the irreverent poetry and triumphant sound makes even the squarest of squares aware of—resulted in Parker's becoming something far more "primitive": a sacrificial figure whose struggles against personal chaos, on stage and off, served as entertainment for a ravenous, sensation-starved, culturally disoriented public which had but the slightest notion of its real significance. *(Shadow and Act,* pp. 226-227)

This is a resonant insight, to recognize Parker's confounding excesses as a struggle endemic to jazz—that of avoiding the mask at all costs. It's not

until the Art Ensemble of Chicago literally painted their faces and rehabilitated the theatrical space of minstrelsy that jazz musicians showed any conscious awareness of the unavoidable injunction of the mask.

The mask, in jazz, has turned out to be a two-way street. For to think only of black musician's tentative or ambiguous relations with the mask is to miss the essential point of its reciprocal function. "Mastery of form" in Baker's sense is a tradition that, after Satchmo (a minstrel tag), is taken up with eagerness by *white* musicians. Benny Goodman is Armstrong's minstrel successor. And with this we're back to Roy Wagner's point about the best pig being a cow. The best minstrel is a white man (Paul Whiteman initially) in blackface. And after World War II the obligatory minstrelsy of the hipster cool, likewise, is a predominantly white affair. The cavernous echo-chamber of mutual accusation that opened in the artificial rift between hot and cool in the fifties persists, if not in the terms of that particular standoff.[5] What was lost in the din (the real noise, the constant irrelevant yammering about "authenticity") was the drama of the real historical person, acting in the theatrical proscenium of a cultural "deficit" nobody could ever hope to defray. Jazz was the society of masks and masquerade, where indelible theorems of the state of the soul could be paraded, hooted out, addressed in the buoyancy of invisibility:

> Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. *(Invisible Man* p. 8)

Those breaks are rifts in the glacial formation of oppressive histories. Looking around in the gap is riffing, feeling for the "bridge," the "release" as it's called, that puts you over on the other side. For jazz is a music that has often acted on the intuition that history is already *played out,* that its mode of storytelling is a sequence of detonations and that, in the order of things, a drum is a more beneficent explosive device than a bomb.

—JED RASULA

[5] The current revival of interest in jazz and the corresponding rush to market new jazz lines from the major record labels has a foreboding bias. While RCA has released a Henry Threadgill lp, and Columbia has picked up the Donald Harrison/Terence Blanchard group (riding on the success of the Marsalis brothers), these and other labels have devoted nearly all their attention to white players. While the inclusion of Jane Ira Bloom and Tim Berne on Columbia, and Steve Lacy on RCA's Novus label, means that some of the most exciting white players are being noticed, the disproportionate number of whites signed to the majors signals, more than anything, that the revitalized jazz audience has taken out a new lease on Tom Sawyer's fence.

JAZZ GUITAR NOTES

(The main body of this piece has been excerpted from letters D.M. wrote to me in 1982. Recently I asked if he wanted to modify, or add to, his earlier comments and he wrote the addenda which follow. —C.C.)

The guitarists are numerous but all, except Derek Bailey and his extensions, root out of the Charlie Christian/Django Reinhardt line. Acoustic players were working into similar single-string soloing—a lot of early Django is acoustic—but the electric guitar's cosmos is mapped almost simultaneously (with some marvelous differences) by Django and Christian. Christian was more compact and played those Basie spaces with new power through an amplifier, a startling phenomenon at first for the ear to adjust to in a live session, the solo detached from the instrument and emerging from another sound source. His blues-based riff-lines were articulate while still functioning as traditional band-guitar rhythm adjunct. Whereas Django, also a strong rhythmic player, unrolled more ornate astonishments in his lines, all the more amazing since, besides partial use of his fingering hand, he composed most of his solos on the down-stroke, i.e., flatpicking in one direction on the strings instead of crosspicking (flatpicking up and down across the keyboard). Though Django played/recorded the major body of his material acoustically, his style was electric and it is ironic that he had such a tough time learning how to "play" the amplifier as well as the guitar plugged into it. This resolved in his last two record-dates, the one for Norman Ganz with Pierre Michelot on bass, and another one for French Decca with that trio and supplemental trumpet, sometimes vibes, Martial Solal the pianist, 1956-7. Django/Christian: strong linear players as opposite of Derek Bailey. Hendrix takes Christian no further but is a pioneer in playing the amplifier, making the electric guitar more wide-ranging in its sound-making capability. Bailey expands on the electronic, and stops expressing music through linearity, becomes more concerned with sound, clusters of sounds which stand as completely expressed units within a specific time length. Pointillist, truly abstracted, on his own, and definitely worth listening to, especially in solo records, any of them worth starting with.

I've always liked the Jim Hall/Bill Evans collaborations. Minor sessions, charming and listenable. Two jazz gentlemen: so pathologically introverted, polite, tentative, that I perversely keep waiting for someone to fart, which, of course, nobody does. Hall becomes more and more minimal until today, if you wanted to, you could make binaural or bipolar correspondences to Derek Bailey and Hall—even though Hall's the more, what?, traditional? Their shared approach to the electronic aspect of the guitar and

amplifier, their restructurings of space with silence as well as the sustained single note, is worth noting. Hall is master of the round tone; he must minus-out his treble controls because you never hear, even in the early '50s sideman/leader dates, a trebly-sounding Hall solo. Lots of bottom, the technocrats would say. The same applies to that absolute exemplar of bop/post-bop guitar, Jimmy Raney, whose lines are cornerstone for guitarists afterwards.

The first Raney I heard was on a 10" Prestige yellow label (with Miro-esque spermlike squiggles on the label) album with a proxy Franz Kline cover reading something like JIMMY RANEY QUARTET featuring pseudonymous "Sven Koolsen" (or something like that) a.k.a. Stan Getz, and shortly thereafter heard him as part of a Teddy Charles ensemble on another 10" Prestige that also featured pianist Hall Overton and whatever-happened-to Frank Isola, all of which has been reissued on either a Prestige twofer of early Getz or a single Prestige similarly titled. The point of which is that Raney was the first electric guitarist to my ears to impose a distinct style for that instrument fully aware of the bebop rhythmic/harmonic propositions. During bop's unfolding, that hot point between 1945 and 1950, no guitarist emerged to fully comprehend or utilize bop's possibilities, and I'm including Billy Bauer. Raney's solos (and tone) were equivalent to a horn's; his line as fluid as a horn. (The guitarists you sometimes hear with Bird like Mundell Lowe or, I'm phonetically reconstructing a name, Deronne or Debonne—one of those "live" wire-recordings recorded, it sounds like, from under the stage—or Slim Gaillard or even Les Paul, make Raney's accomplishment immediately audible.) Also his chordal sense was up-to-date whereas Django/Christian were uneven in the chord department, just like guitarist Johnny Smith is really serene to hear as a chordal soloist and less so as a single-string player. Yet for overall tone, old Mr. Moonlight in Vermont opened up the amplified sound as a subtle enclosure that someone like Jim Hall would adopt to round out his own conception. But it's Raney at the fulcrum of post-bop guitar masters. It's safe to say that after the Christian/Django nexus, the next split-screen is filled with Raney/Farlow. I enter Tal Farlow as a way of maintaining dualism, and in the Tao of guitar Farlow's percussive line, like TV commercial dominoes clacking against each other into infinity, is the opposite of Raney's full-toned linearity. Raney plays it like a bop hornplayer; Farlow plays it like electric guitar, like Christian, combination rhythm-insist and plectral musings on the single string. For Raney, the aforementioned Getz albums, or any of the newer records on Xanadu (solo or with trio), are cases in point. I don't know much about Raney himself but I do know that from the mid '50s on he became less and less visible as a leader and more and more vaguely audible as sideman on all kinds of schlock 'n crock dates, gradually,

according to Steve Swallow, becoming really short-circuited by uncontrollable alcoholism, which, like Jim Hall, he was able to bail-out of and is now dry and playing again as those Xanadu albums testify. Swallow recalled a date in the studio with Raney and Hall, Zoot Sims too, a boozer's phantasmagoria, with Raney and Hall taking turns puking in the can and Zoot chuggling on his mug of spirits, all of it resulting, despite the physiologic armageddoning, in a rather low-key sweet record on Mainstream whose title I've forgotten and which I'd like to own again.

The essential Farlow is probably those two discs with Eddie Costa and Vinnie Burke recorded in Jerry Newman's apartment. There are some Verves with the same line-up that are equally good, also the Prestige twofer Tal Farlow album, one disc devoted to Red Norvo trio beauties, the other to a '60s comeback session. Of the newer releases, the best I've heard is called something like TRINITY with Mike Knock and a first-rate rhythm section.

I guess the real dichotomy with guitar is: one the one side, played liked a horn, and on the other, played like a piano a la George Van Eps or Luis Bonfa or Ed Bickert (a Hall-sourced player who, in my book, often transcends the master with a larger range of know-how and dynamics). Along the line there have been excellent yeomen like Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel, and Joe Pass. What's come forth from that generation that interests me are players like John Scofield and Jack Wilkins (there's a double-record live Bob Brookmeyer date on the Gryphon label, sometimes remaindered, featuring Wilkins which is quite good). Folks like Ralph Towner and John Abercrombie do some pleasant work but often sound like glossy noodling of a higher musical intelligence than John Fahey or Leo Kotke. Abercrombie has an album on a low-budget label, Jam Records, STRAIGHT FLIGHT, a surprise and a worthwhile sleeper, where he plays standards in a trio format, George Mraz on bass, and as usual I forget the drummer's name. Also Towner in duo with Gary Burton on ECM (MATCHBOOK) is seductive. John McLaughlin's MY GOAL'S BEYOND is a favorite of mine. I've never been that pleased or excited by Larry Coryell, but A for effort anyway. He often sounds more alert in tandem with another guitarist, i.e., two albums with Phillipe Catherine, or one on Vanguard with McLaughlin. Someone like Fred Frith gives me more to listen to than most of his contemporaries. James "Blood" Ulmer, the disco-funked Ornettian, gives me most delight with Ornette—he sounds more restricted in a lot of his other work, sounds like he should listen more carefully to the Magic Band guitarist (now *there's* an ensemble!).

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Hopeless task to rewrite, amplify, implode, erase, without exploding what's already here. Instead, some supplemental annotations.

Paragraph 1: Add or re-emphasize another equally distinct (and demanding) guitar method in jazz: finger-picking. Besides obvious roots in ancestor lute procedure, it was restated by early country-blues artists like Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Robert Johnson. A few foremost jazz practitioners are/were George Van Eps (playing a specially built 7-string Epiphone guitar—the extra string, tuned an octave below the A string, functions as bass-line anchor against chord melody verticals), Luis Bonfa, Baden Powell (the bossa nova guitarists are invariably left out of normative jazz criticism), Lenny Breau. (Breau died recently, murdered, at 43. Had an amazing ability to play (imply) a simultaneous bass line, chord progression, and melody line.) Recent work by Stanley Jordan extends the possibility of re-seeing the fretboard as a piano keyboard.

Paragraph 3: Raney recently visible/audible on European labels. Also a few albums in duet with his son Doug. Almost impossible to distinguish which Raney is soloing, their sound/approach is so similar. The most immediate heir to the Raney approach—beside Doug Raney—is post-bop astute Bruce Foreman. His recent duo date with pianist George Cables is a fine example of the Raney influx.

Paragraph 4: In rehearing Farlow, I'm tempted to fit him in that ozone reserved for other precarious danger-mice like Pee Wee Russell. Some Farlow solos a la out-of-synch card-sharp trying a waterfall shuffle. Banana peel-out solos descending out of Fibber's closet.

Paragraph 5: It'll take me a while to absorb recent technologic "advancements" for the guitar, i.e., the synthesizer. So far the music hasn't advanced to the level of machines reproducing it. Is the whip-lash of the Free Jazz moment to be played-out in the rationalization of Jazz? (See my ongoing/forthcoming "The Death of Jazz As I Imagined It")

—DAVID MELTZER

SNOW

Who among us has not heard (and repeated) the fact that Eskimo languages contain a dozen, a score, a hundred,. . .well, many words for snow? In the June 1986 issue of *American Anthropologist* a correction is provided by the anthropological linguist Laura Martin: "'Eskimo Words for Snow': A Case Study in the Genesis and Decay of an Anthropological Example."

Martin traces the "fact" in question to a casual reference in Franz Boas' 1911 Introduction to the *Handbook of North American Indian Languages* where he mentions four lexically distinct words in Eskimo: *aput* "snow on the ground," *qana* "falling snow," *piqsirpoq* "drifting snow," and *qimuqsuq* "a snow drift." In 1940 the claim appears again as a passing reference by Benjamin Lee Whorf in his frequently reprinted article, "Science and Linguistics." The number of words has grown to five, and where Boas used the example to show a similarity between English and (undifferentiated) "Eskimo", Whorf now uses it to illustrate a difference. In *The Silent Language* (1959) by Edward Hall the Eskimo forms have become "nouns" and an unspecified, but apparently large number is suggested. Roger Brown's *Words and Things* (1958) gives three Eskimo snow words, but is unclear about what counts as a "word" in Eskimo languages.

And so it goes. A scholarly game of telephone tropes the original message while in the less "rigorous" media, Eskimo snow words explode from nine to fifty, to "many", to a *New York Times* editorial (Feb. 9, 1984) which, citing Whorf, invokes a "tribe" that can name "one hundred types of snow."

Laura Martin's essay addresses the question—never raised by the scholars and lay experts she cites—of what "words" are. Eskimo word structure is far more complex than that of English. Its units are frequently quite long, containing many morphemes (the basic semantic building blocks). An indefinite number of suffixes can be added to "roots;" and some Eskimo "words" are whole sentences.

The force of the popular "Eskimo words for snow" example depends on an assumption of equivalence between English "word" and Eskimo "word." But only the existence of many Eskimo snow *roots* would support the example's more radical implications. Of course, to say that English has many *compounds, phrases* or *sentences* involving snow is banal, and to observe that Eskimo has scores of snow words is to say much the same thing. (Surfers may have an elaborate language of waves—but not 20 "words" for wave.)

Martin informs us that there are no more than *two* Eskimo roots referring to snow, rather than to drifts, storms, moisture, and so on: "snow in the air" and "snow on the ground." Compounds, phrases, and sentences

may be built on these two roots, but they are not "words for snow" any more than English expressions like "snowstorm," "snowball fight," or "the kids' big snowfort." In fact, counting Eskimo words for snow, rather than roots, would be a little like making an inventory of all the different phrases in which "snow" appears in Joyce's story "The Dead" and calling each one a word.

Martin concludes: "the structure of Eskimo grammar means that the number of 'words' for snow is literally incalculable, a conclusion that is inescapable for any other root as well." At first this observation itself seems quite exotic. An "incalculable" number? But it merely summarizes what is generally true of "agglutinative" languages—Eskimo, Turkish, Japanese, among others. Contemporary linguistics is fundamentally anti-exotic, for it undermines the notion that any language is stranger than any other. The short, often unembellished "nouns" of English are no less bizarre than the extremely complex lexical units of Eskimo or Turkish.

Laura Martin's lucid cautionary tale is marred in places by a tone of scholarly righteousness. If only, she says, proper standards, careful use of sources and clear presentation of evidence had been observed, this sad series of distortions would never have occurred. Perhaps. But that kind of critique does not begin to probe the persistent appeal of the "Eskimo words for snow" idea. Nor does it get us very far to mention, in passing, "the process of folklorization that can remove scholarly statements from their rightful context and cause misinterpretation." Science and folklore (ideology, deep cultural assumptions and beliefs) are seldom neatly separable, especially when it comes to representing exotic societies.

And for those, like me, who cling to the dream of an informed, self-critical exoticism it is troubling to have to abandon one of our best "believe it or not" examples. The basic claim being made in many evocations of "Eskimo words for snow" is true. People elsewhere do, through their language and world view, cut up the world differently than we do—differently and often much more subtly. It's hard to give up the aesthetic/epistemologcal impact of the trope. An all-too-familiar noun/thing "snow" (And what could be more blank, more blanketing of variety, of life itself? . . .as in "The Dead") suddenly facets, divides, slides, multiplies into a new field of qualities, actions, processes, objects. Isn't this opening of possibilities what exoticism is good for? Will we be able to find other examples of non-Western lexical richness that work as well as Eskimo snow? I'm not sure.

I find it easier, however, to give up "Eskimo words for snow" when I put it in an ideological context not explored by Laura Martin, but made visible in an earlier paper of a similar sort: "A Note on Primitive Languages," *International Journal of American Linguistics*, Vol. 18, (1951-52), 172-177. Here Archibald Hill debunks a "fact" popularized by the linguist Otto

Jesperson, among others, that Cherokee contains "thirteen verbs for washing." Hill's close analysis of the Cherokee data produces a corrosive effect similar to Martin's. And in the process one of the less savory implications of the "many words" trope is made clearer—its claim that tribal peoples are less inclined to generalize than Westerners. *Their* languages are "concrete," *ours* "abstract," a statement dangerously close to: primitives are *incapable* of generalization. Few would assert this today. But are we released from a basically colonialist dichotomy when we simply reverse its sign, as in many invocations of "Eskimo words for snow," making concreteness positive rather than negative, a virtue rather than an incapacity?

Jerome Rothenberg opened *Technicians of the Sacred* (1968, 1985) with a memorable statement, "Primitive means complex" (. . .noting a few lines later that "the language of snow among the Eskimo is awesome"). Appropriately, he turned to "contemporary linguistics" for support: there simply *are* no simple languages. "People who have failed to achieve the wheel will not have failed to invent & develop a highly wrought grammar." While contemporary linguists are divided over the extent to which grammatical forms are "invented," rather than "hard wired" in the organism, Rothenberg's basic point is still crucial. And it needs constant reemphasis, given an apparently perennial need to believe in the existence of "simple," "untouched," "backward" peoples. (The recently-exposed hoax of the "Stone Age" Tassaday in the Philippines is a case in point. So is the informal poll I just took in a large class of University of California students, a majority of whom believed quite literally the opening of the film "The Gods Must Be Crazy." Somewhere there exists a tribe so isolated and naive that a Coke bottle dropped from a passing airplane can sow major confusion. The people in the film, the !Kung San of Botswana—"bushmen" featured in a long tradition of Western travel writing—have, of course, been in contact and conflict with the outside world for centuries.) In combating the dream of simple "primitive," or "tribal," societies, the argument from linguistic complexity can be effective. But the appeal needs to be made with knowledge of the indigenous facts, and not at the cost of reinventing reductive dichotomies.

One final hope for chastened exoticists: Perhaps the !Kung San can help fill the void left by all those evocative by non-existent "words for snow." Because the !Kung have been studied by teams of academic researchers for quite some time now, we have access to abundant, detailed information about their language and society. They probably have quite a few words for "anthropologist."

—JAMES CLIFFORD

ALAN DAVIES, *NAME,* This, 1986

Name occurs within a dance of pronouns. . . a triangulation from "I" to "you" to find "we". . . in a system of speech constituted, in part, by time and a present which slips into the past quicker than you can say "are" or I can write "name." Of course, the stability of these pronouns belies a changeability. Shall we recall H.D.'s insight in *Hermetic Definitions?* "Where am I? / the 'other side' where you always were" (27). To the extent that a speaker is traditionally thought of as a masculine role and the listener feminine, H.D.'s point has added significance. In *Name,* the pronouns are similarly sexed, if differently placed—"you" is usually (though not invariably) female and "I," though not who I now claim to be, am male. Does it matter who says these things? "Remember / me as I am now because / I will always have been / different" (20). Is this a grammatical admission or a personal one?

"It must have been you / that was I, I that was / you, in speech" (43). Is this an issue of function rather than identity? Am I really different, depending on whether I am now I (the speaker) or you (the listener)? We do tend to have images, after all, of the active "I" and the passive "you." The fact that we are both of us "I" and "you" doesn't change this. After all, "Speech is between us" (42); the way in which "I" is linked to "you" to make "us." "Between us" suggests both something we might share and something we cannot resolve. But the "I" and the "you" are out of balance. To the extent that I am addressing you, a certain similarity (or humanity) is assumed. To the extent that I want to reach you, that I need you, you are all I lack. Therefore, "you are a surrogate" (73). But, so, too, that lack can make me mean—"You're broken up / and lonely" (77) and "you / surely / don't / think" (76). There is, then, a disequilibrating space in the "you" (13). But there didn't have to be: witness Carla Harryman's "I seek the stabilizing 'you'" *[Vice,* 89]. Thus, one question is "where are you / in this incipient congress / of values" (46).

"You" seem to be at (or near) a limit—where I point but not what I reach. Thus, there is a distance ("the overall distance / between us" [90]) that draws us on but which we do not fill: "Sentences are filling / a space we / ourselves should occupy" (31). This distance may allow for a certain self-consciousness, a perspective in which we do not feel a present necessity. Thus, "Salvage words / from words that we / say merely that we / mean to say it" (32). The two clauses, neatly balancing actions ("that we"), set up a finely tuned chain of relations, but the result is that, instead of saying what we mean, we can say only that we mean to say it. We are trapped, then, in the layer of intention and, in that layer, we can say only what we would do and do nothing.

But there is more than a credo of absence offered here. Charles Bernstein, in *The Sophist,* commented that "nothing / is adequate / against *ab*sense" (158). We crave, then, not the removal of sense, but the full play of sense, a full-bodied (or fully embodied) sense. Is this what Davies wants, too? Through "you," Davies says, "was Name" (78). Thus, Name came to us through the other pole (the receiver) of discourse. This means the listener isn't passive; further, there is a give-and-take, a process of discovery, that takes place in speech: "So that your discourse and my discourse / can happen over the same wire / in occluding directions, / and with no dispersal" (90). There is a union without obliteration of identities (though phrased here in general terms), an embrace without loss, and, if this makes the telephone sound like a marriage bed, so be it.

Such an identification, however, does suggest that sense extends beyond the fleshly covering. Therefore, the heart (already a figure of speech) pushes us, finally, not to grasp the physical (though it does this, too), but to make of feeling a speech, for "the heart ends in creeds of speech" (79). The heart, then, would be nothing without figuration or a belief in the verity or power of speech. Surely "the heart" takes on more significance than its physical wont. What does the heart express through speech in Davies? Speech made "us," a whole of "you" and "I." Without speech, then, or with a misunderstanding of speech ("If we misunderstand / speech we know nothing / and I am speaking to you" [62]), we are fragmented, cut off from a whole we might have reached, but only through speech. This wholeness is possible, of course, only with your cooperation: "We are whole / in advanced articulate address. / I advance to you our wholeness" (84). If "you" refuse, shan't we both be less?

—BRUCE CAMPBELL

THREE RESPONSES TO CHARLES BERNSTEIN'S *THE SOPHIST*

1.

"At first all artists, and even Philosophers themselves, were call'd sophisters." John Norris, *Treatise Concerning Christian Prudence* (1710).

"*Sophist*. . .1. In ancient Greece, one especially engaged in the pursuit and communication of knowledge; esp. one who gave instruction in intellectual and ethical matters in return for payment.

"In the latter sense contrasted with *philosopher,* and freq. used as a term of disparagement." *Oxford English Dictionary.*

The suffix -ist denotes agency, as in: Sophist (one who practises knowledge), bigamist, capitalist, rapist, shootist, chemist, opportunist, imperialist, balloonist, artist, fetishist, cyclist, socialist, hedonist, florist, egoist. One may well recall Blake's proverb: "Thought is Act." The activist element, however, is not always so visible in the words—for example when an -istword denotes a person who professes or adheres to certain ideas or opinions (deist, Thomist, positivist); or when the word designates other, looser kinds of association (querist, statist).

Bernstein's *The Sophist* should be read in this context. It is a book which does more than take the agenting function of language for its theme (rhetoric), as the title itself shows. For to put that title at the head of a book of poetry is to foreground the ideological struggle which is embodied in the history of that word. It is a word which should remind us that Socrates was a sophist before he became a Platonist, and that the transformation of Socrates from "sophist" to "Philosopher" involved an effort, monumentally successful it must be seen, to transform—to transcendentalize—"knowledge" into "Truth". Today the word "sophist" always carries the overtone of a nonserious quibber, one who is more involved with "words" than with "things", with the play and surfaces of thought rather than with the "realities" of truth. *The Sophist* does not change the meaning of that received word, or of any of the other words, word strings, or forms of syntax which appear in this book (all those inheritances of our language); it simply puts them into an activist framework. The title of this book activates once again the issue of the relation of knowledge to material agency; and it does so under the sign of, through the agency of, poetry. This point is important, for by operating in poetry—by choosing to work with a marginal tool (foregrounded in the choice of publisher and mode of distribution)—Bernstein has defined, situated, the line of his activism. This book contests the linguistic illusions which underpin the dominant forms of discourse practiced today, and all forms of discourse which distinguish "words" from "things", "ideas" from "acts". Once again the relation of knowledge and money is also brought to the foreground—knowledge and history, society, institutions, and the linguistic forms in which those "powers and dominions" secret(e) themselves.

—JEROME McGANN

2: "Syncopation Against the Borderline": Charles Bernstein's *The Sophist*

Where is the inside, where the outside, in Charles Bernstein's *The Sophist?* Bernstein's line proceeds by accumulating tones, images, rhetorics, etc. The result may, at times, be comic, absurd, or uneasy, but the effect of line opening onto line is serious and considered. It's the technical equivalent of throwing the boundary between inside and outside into question. Potentially, any style is appropriate, any style "natural," and, so, one style (one rhetoric, etc.) can not be used to delegitimize others. The result is a sometimes giddy conglomeration of technical language, doggerel, advertising slogans, colloquialisms, etc.—all demanding attention.

Bernstein doesn't want to eradicate the line between inside and outside as much as he wants to show how it can be viewed differently. Principally his concern focuses on the prejudice that the self is a spot free equally from the taint of others and from the concessions necessary in the "real world." Such a prejudice might well concern a writer because writing is often conceived as the privileged access to this privileged "internal man." But, in our post-structuralist days, we have realized that writing is made up of the voices of others: "It's ground encapsulated onto dubbed" (90). There is no carefully delineated, protected self existing as a kind of internal object (or disk drive free from the programs of others). I don't make up my language and, so, using language exposes how dependent on the human community I am. The activity of writing, instead of corresponding to the Romantic myth of communing with the soul, unveils how contingent the soul is on community.

This, then, is a poetry of relations, not objects—or of objects seen in a network of relations. Without these relations, the object is in danger of evaporating into airy nostrums. But (and this is important), the emphasis on relations must not lead us to fuse everything into one blob of totality. We need a perspective that respects connections ***and*** limits, for in Bernstein fusion leads to confusion ("to con*fuse* this"). So, on the one hand, if we fail to discriminate between things, we are mistaken; but we are equally mistaken to think each thing stands alone.

The need to discriminate leads to cautions against identification: "No identification, only / restitution" (45); or "We 'are' each other only insofar as each / can recognize and acknowledge the differences / (as in separately bodied)—to con*fuse* this risks a rule of / power only" (171). But the discrimination must not lead to exclusion, if "everything counts" (81). Such a dual project calls for a prodigious feat of memory, a memory that respects differences for "semblance [is the] place of memory's / Loss" (14). And it calls for a prodigious awareness, an awareness that extends beyond literature to other uses of language. All the same, Bernstein can not take

this extension-beyond-literature for granted. After all, he asks, "How in heaven do you get an outside line?" (142).

—BRUCE CAMPBELL

3: Bernstein's *The Sophist*

1)

The sophist Gorgias of Leontini wrote a book entitled *Concerning What Is Not or Concerning Nature.* He argued 1) that nothing exists; 2) if something existed, it could not be known; and 3) if it could be known, it could not be communicated. His argument turns out to be strong, even if it was proposed as a *tour de force:*

> For if what exists is visible and audible and, in general, perceptible (I mean, what lies outside us), and if what is visible is grasped by sight, and what is audible by hearing, and not vice versa, then how can these things be signified to anyone else? For that by which we signify is a formula *(logos),* and what lies outside us and exists is not a formula; therefore we do not signify to our neighbors what exists but a formula which is different from what lies outside us. Thus just as what is visible could not become audible, or the reverse, so, since what exists lies outside us, it cannot become our formula; and if its not a formula, it will not be signified to anyone else.

To combat such arguments Socrates proposed the existence of a *knowable* Absolute. It was an extreme argument, and western history has unspooled from this Socratic audacity.

We have now returned to the beginning, which is not a Word but an entire rhetoric. Arguments reminiscent of Gorgias' are common. In an early issue of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, for example, Barrett Watten writes: "The problem is, does this person, in what is merely an adaptation to his environment, develop a language we can identify as our own. The problem of translation. Referents drop away."

2)

In his title, Bernstein identifies himself positively with the sophists. He is not, however, a rhetorician, at least not in the usual sense of the word. When it is understood that Gorgias' argument also applies to itself, the resulting paradox cripples rhetoric and renders prose as such impossible.

Bernstein writes, "in prose you start with the world / and find the words to match." The problem is in the matching. ". . .in poetry you start / with the words and find the world in them." ("Dysraphism")

A few of these poems are "demonstrations of method," most notably "I and the," a large dead chunk in the middle of the volume, in which, to be sure, a world is found, but a world as mechanical as the method of the poem itself. In most of the poems, however, the world, including language as the world's furniture, not method, is the locus of attention. The purpose is not demonstration but the intensity of life's preoccupation with itself:

> Voice seems
> to break
> over these
> short lines
> cracking or
> setting loose.
> I see a world
> & it repeats
> itself as
> your location. . . .
>
> ("The Years as Swatches")

The secret of sophistry as a way of truth-telling is to find the places where language breaks down, revealing the locations of those with whom we would communicate.

Protagoras said, in his most famous dictum, "Of all things a measure is man—of the things that are, that they are; of the things that are not, that they are not." Plato mistakenly understood Protagoras to say that "things are as they seem,"—that is, that he mistook the shadow on the wall for the real thing.

To take measure, however, is not to make a judgment in relation to a methodology but to lay down one's body or one's words as a yardstick. When the measure of two people do not coincide, it does not mean that one is wrong; it means that they are using different scales. "Things that are" can be measured in relation to a generalized methodology or a concrete literal world:

> Don't be afraid, gentle writers, gentle speakers, that you won't communicate or will be too intellectual. Only when such concerns fall away, like calluses from our tongues, and we are left just to do and be, not trying to communicate out of a fear of being unable to, will language takes its rightful place as love. ("The Only Utopia Is in a

Now")

In the best of these poems language begins to take its rightful place.

—DON BYRD

BARRETT WATTEN ON POETRY AND POLITICS: AN INTERVIEW BY GEORGE HARTLEY

GH Would you explain the title of your book, *Total Syntax?*
BW The idea was, "What I want is a more total syntax." That is, the syntax of a work of art could be imagined to be inherent in the work, but a more *total* syntax would relate the work to orders of experience outside it. When "total syntax" is separated from that sentence, however, it becomes a little curious; how could a syntax being total be very workable or interesting? In a way, it could mean a kind of infinite expansion, as with a letter in which the last line of the address is "the mind of God"—where do you stop? It could also be, like, *total* syntax—all syntax, no content— where there's no room for substance because everything is just relation—and that's not what I meant. Looking at the title by itself, you have a kind of polysemy that implies an interest in extending the implications of art from the work into the world, but one that also begs the questions of closure, totalization. And in fact I'm not arguing for a totalization of art in political, psychological, or linguistic senses.

More specifically, it's the title of the chapter on Robert Smithson and Clark Coolidge, and in those two artists I'm seeing ways of extending the work into the world that are constitutive of the works themselves. The discussion of scale and metaphor in Smithson is about how Smithson's work created a syntax of site/nonsite, in-the-gallery/outside-the-gallery, a syntax-of-materials/a syntax-of-locations. With Coolidge there is a temporal extension, a sort of romantic questioning that extends the work in time metonymically. Both necessitate a larger syntax by virtue of what they are doing at the point of production of their work.

I don't think the questions that are raised by the book are settled in any particular way. By the end of the book, a "total syntax" turns out to be an open-ended one. How can you have a totalizing open-endedness? It seems to me a structural instability.

GH When you say, "I want a more total syntax," that seems to imply that people previously haven't been approaching a work through all the dimensions of syntax. Is there any person or school or line of theory that you had in mind that you were countering?
BW Yes—the habits of reading you learn in your education, the "Let's look at this line" kind of close reading. There's a tremendous amount of authority that's being argued in the practice of close readings. It's not just a question of how to read but of how to measure oneself experientially against the poem, a question of measuring one's validity in terms of craft that begins in the process of reading and ends in reproducing the workshop poem. I don't write that kind of poetry, but the charged environment of close reading and of measuring oneself against decisions involved in writing at that level I think were influential—if you can see them as being argued negatively in my work against the kind of poetry they were supposed to produce. There was a kind of resistance to that method, and at the same time, "I'll go them one better. I'll show the professors how to read." Zukofsky's another example of a writer who took the habits of the academy and returned them in a different style of writing.

GH I'd like to talk more about the academy. What has the reception been so far? So you think the academy as a whole would be open to the things you're proposing and the works you are examining in *Total Syntax?*
BW Well, there's currently a project in the academy to dismantle poetics that involve only a syntax within the poem—where if there's a syntax outside the poem, it's the poet's role as professional or as country gentleman. It seems to me that there are people working critically in the academy who would be interested in what we are doing because it is, I think, relevant to thinking about relations between language, psychology, and social orders, and so forth. But it may turn out that even though there are critical positions that *should* be interested in our work, there's no guarantee that they won't just lead to a validation of the role of the professional, and therefore to the kind of poetry written in conservative forms by those aspiring to similar roles.

The question is, What kind of literary culture does the academy want? And I think that's a question the academy needs to deal with. If you look at the representation of poetry in *The New York Review of Books* or *The American Poetry Review,* it's often what I would call nonserious. There's a good reason for nonserious work being produced in the academy. What it would finally take for the academy to be interested in what we are doing would be for it to be equally interested in renegotiating intellectual roles outside its areas of expertise. There will be a complicity if there's a larger social reason for it. But it seems we are entering a neoconservative environment in which many who have invested in contextual aesthetics are

rethinking their positions. So I don't think there's any guarantee that the academy finally is going to validate our work.

GH I was wondering, did you have in mind the notion of total syntax while you were writing *Progress?* The external syntax, I guess, is what has been traditionally excluded from consideration. Do you as a poet consciously try to work that dimension in, either in *Progress* or your other works?
BW *Progress,* as is obvious from its title and length, is involved in time, duration, getting from one place to another, willed activity—I want to progress. The temporal duration of writing the poem is being matched against the experience of the time I was living in, June 1982 to May 1983, the Reagan recession. The poem was written over the winter of the darkest year of this recession, an important period in that it was one in which a lot of expectations were being reformulated by virtue of economic constraints. I mean, Reagan had put the screws to the economy. A lot of people were out of work, the job situation was bad, and one was forced to renegotiate expectations in terms of this well-orchestrated psychological/economic campaign.

So the poem was written in this period. One of the things that happens in it is a continual breaking down of its assumptions, almost violently, by undercutting them. There is a fair amount of willful dissociation and undermining of statement that is being built on to create the conditions for statement. The negativity in the construction of the work is in fact what forms the argument of the poem. And this negativity often has the exact effect of sundering the inherence of the poem's own argument, opening it to facts that impinge on it from outside. These are similar to the kinds of negative information you get during an administered psychological campaign such as one might have experienced at that time.

Another parallel example of the social form that influenced the writing of *Progress,* I think, was the media campaign during the hostage crisis, where every day for almost a year we were being fed information that "Your interests are being frustrated! Your interests are being frustrated!"—and that campaign set up Reagan's election. This may have been a replay or reversal of the media's role in the Vietnam War. Later, during the period of the Reagan recession, I think that form was thought to be very successful. There was a constant barrage of negative information—so many people out of work, so many plants closed—coming in at regular intervals. At every interval in which you might have built up a head of steam for your own purposes, recuperate your own argument as it were, there would be another dose of "Things are getting worse. Things are getting worse." Well, either that mimics the logic of the poem [laughs] or the poem is involved with that kind of deferral.

At the same time there was a playing around with information coming in from outside the poem, not only negative information but also the

random, the gratuitous, the way one knows one's situation by grappling not only with relevant "objective" information—trends in the economy and so forth—but also with bizarre, reified facts that still give a picture of what the world is. At the same time that you are getting doses of intentionally negative information, you're also getting news about the Great White Shark that was sighted off Point Reyes or the man who fell on his head onto a drill bit, reversed the drill, and drove himself to the hospital—that was something that came over the news that became part of the poem. And that becomes a metaphor, then, for consciousness [laughs].

GH What's going on with the line structure and the ellipses and so on, especially the variation of indentation?
BW That's just a flexibility that keeps the incremental property of the poem from becoming too predictable. By having a flexible form, by being able to vary where the line breaks, you keep from having a parallelism that would have made the poem impossible to write. It's a structural instability that is constantly breaking in new way and always gives you a choice, "I think I'll break here." In this way the recurrence of the stanza can be fresh enough without a simply incremental association. The ellipses were originally to be read as breaks, saying "Signing off! This transmission has now ended!"—you know, the last line of that story by H.P. Lovecraft where the guy's being eaten by a blob and his hand trails down the page. But when reading I invariably read right through them. The caesurae are the end stops that actually occur in the stanzas, so the ellipses have no meaning except as a physical habit of typing four dots that made me think about breaking the attention.

GH The other night after Nick Piombo's talk [August 11, 1986 at Intersection, San Francisco] many people mentioned that just the way he presented the talk brought up a lot of questions besides what he was saying. And you were asking what sort of effect that presentation, that blankness, would have on readers. Would you explain what's behind your question?
BW He seemed to be saying that there is an inevitable bad outcome to writing that is organized in terms of topic and comment, theme and subject matter—i.e., content. The writer is going to encounter blocks in having to organize his thinking around the topic, and the reader is going to be subordinated to the text. There's going to be a power imbalance between the person reading the text and the person hearing and understanding it. I was saying that it may be true that these kinds of repression are going to exist in writing, but I don't see that an open text, one that isn't organized around content, doesn't run similar risks in terms of overcoding or blanking out (undercoding).

I think that Nick is saying that he feels an untenable authority in writing that is organized in terms of subject matter, and that for his purposes he

is involved with forms of mimic dissociation that one might experience as Freud's "evenly hovering attention." But my experience of texts that are written without intentions for overriding structure is that they can equally beg the question entirely and end up imposing another form of power imbalance on the reader. So I don't see any essential connection between what kind of writing your are doing—whether dissociative or hierarchically subordinated—and the power imbalance in a communicative act.

GH There isn't a privileged form in a political sense?
BW Right, I reject that. I think what's important is the role one is in and the intentions one is acting out in the largest sense. You need to ask, "What are you doing? Is there a complicity between what you are doing and what the reader wants? And how do you negotiate that in the work?" I mean, what is the agency of the work? That agency may not be univalent; it may not turn out to be what you say it is. Maybe it's what it turns out to be as others perceive it. But that's not to say that because that's the case, you surrender all attempts at agency. It seems to me that one is creating a community of aims. One of the problems of art is that once everyone agrees that these aims are the same, you have boring art. So in an approach to being an artist, you would not want to say that one's aims are ever going to even out in terms of the audience's expectations.

In that sense the role Nick is interested in could be seen in an analogy to the therapy situation, where the patient and the analyst both agree that they desire a good outcome. Because they agree that they are proceeding along the same lines, they can allow this "evenly hovering attention" to be revealing, whereas if you were standing in a bank line in a state of "evenly hovering attention" and you suddenly started talking in that manner to someone, you would have just violated a social constraint. It seems to me that the same form can be both transgressive and normative, and that Nick, while using language that in some contexts could be seen as transgressive, is opting for a more reciprocal role. He is interested in the same techniques the surrealists used but without the distinction between conscious and unconscious representation. It's a kind of psychoanalytic processing that takes into account the poetics that have developed since surrealism and possibly in reaction to it.

GH The surrealists, Lacan, Jameson, Derrida all posit some kind of unconscious—the structural unconscious, the political unconscious, etc. What role does the unconscious play or what form does it take as you see it?
BW I don't think the use of an analogy between language and the unconscious is adequate as a literary psychology at all. Jameson, in *The Political Unconscious,* is grasping at straws when he tries to make an

ideological, psychological unity out of some such notion as the ideologeme. That seems an error of reading the wrong linguistics, of accepting the linguistics that come through Lacan and Althusser. The linguistic analogy for the unconscious is not adequate to psychological processes that actually occur. But the whole question of what *would* be adequate is wide open at this point. Recently I've been reading the Russian psycholinguist, L.S. Vygotsky, who's early but has things to say about inner speech and socialization that are quite relevant to literary forms, and also Pierre Bourdieu, for his attempt to argue out of the structuralist equivalence of significant terms in a culture and by extension in the psyche. He has come up with notions of process that are both social and interior, really dispensing with the unconscious altogether.

GH Althusser, in his discussion of ideology, wants to bring in something like the unconscious. What would your specific disagreement with him be?
BW I've been interested in Pierre Bourdieu's account of the way social forms are interpreted by subjects in society. It's not that ideology's structured like a language. But there are relations between significant terms in a society, what he calls generative schema, that form an abstract disposition that prefigures interaction. Any response to a social given is met by a capacity to interpret and renegotiate the self in terms of such learned structures. This is what Bourdieu calls the *habitus*, a kind of composite of these generative schema. But this is quite different from the notion of a social unconscious—it seems more useful.

Bourdieu writes about the way the sense of self is bound up with the notion of honor in a society. While honor has something to do with age roles and being accepted into a group as you advance in age, at certain points challenges occur in specific forms. At the moment of recognition of the challenge, you engage in some strategy of response. No matter what happens—if you fail or advance, or if you avoid it altogether—you admit the reality of the challenge, and experience will be structured in those terms. Perhaps the duel of honor has atrophied in our society into playground trashing and its sense of self, but I can imagine a kind of extended analogy to the challenge in which incommensurate information in social space might be taken as a kind of abstract challenge. That is, the reified commodity might be taken as a kind of insult, a displacement. You don't own this, so there's something deficient with you. If you buy it, you've met the challenge; if you reject it, you've decided it's an invalid challenge—you can always choose not to respond.

So Matthew's TV says, "Come to the Top of the Hill, Daly City," and you say, "I'm not challenged by that." But a sixteen-year-old who hasn't figured out his economic viability and feels he has to spend something in order to be with it might take up that challenge, buy the stereo that he may

or may not need, and advance up the ladder of property. It seems to me that such an interactive way of looking at the logic of commodities is better than a language-based one, where the commodity is like a word in a reified language.

GH What is your response to Jameson's postmodernism essay, particularly his section on Bob Perelman?
BW When he says that Bob, when he's writing in a form that's dissociated, is imitating the schizophrenic, that's just wrong. He's writing that way because he's interested in a text with certain properties. He may think it's funny, a goof; it has nothing to do with schizophrenia. But Jameson does say something about the desire for political transformation having to do with dissociation that I think is true—Bob's source for his poem "China" being a Chinese phonetics primer and his use of it as an "original" text being a kind of petit-bourgeois inversion on the order of, "It would be nice to have a social transformation, but since there is none I can only make a joke of myself." In that sense the poem *is* acting out a kind of deflected desire for being part of a social process. This is more accurate than saying that the poem is mimicking the schizophrenic condition.

GH The argument that Jameson doesn't bring up there but that seems to be closely behind it, especially knowing his background in Lucács, is the notion that capitalism is a dissociative force, and that reification, commodification sunder our ties with one another and our connections to the things we make—and there's been the claim that art that isn't realistic is only furthering, is playing into the hands of the status quo, etc. Those people would certainly say that the disjunction in *Progress* would be an example of that.
BW That it excludes, that it constitutes an elite.

GH Yes, as well as Jameson's talk about the need for maps. I guess some people want literature as guidance. And I was wondering how you would see *Progress* as a form of guidance, or if that notion applies.
BW Well, everything has two sides. Abstraction in '40s and '50s painting occurred out of a context that was socially aware and was trying to make a value for a heroic kind of work that would transcend commodity society. It turned out that the paintings were then sold for millions of dollars and became the basis of whole institutions that perpetuate the commodity society. You could also argue that because those paintings did structure those institutions, those institutions are going to be more democratic than they would have been if they had been built on, say, representational paintings. Any social transformation is going to have two sides to it in that way.

I don't think there's any essential validity or invalidity to a form—what's important are its intentions and its particular negotiation with its time and place. In that sense, *Progress* doesn't have an essence, so it can't be said to be reifying—it isn't. I think it would be very difficult to approximate it, to pin it down and build a reified structure on it. But in terms of the formal properties of the text, what I really see as interesting is the way the work functions critically by means of an identification with language that is given a specific value in the work. It says things, particularly about the Vietnam War, that, while occurring as a negotiation of oneself in language, define the act of writing in a specific time and place.

So it's literature, to be read and reflected on. It's also an acting out of certain things, particularly a great deal of social negativity at the beginning of the poem, transgression as much as I could write it. Which isn't to say that I think transgression can be a final value—even that's been shown not to be true.

GH On page 6 of *Progress* you write: "Suppose I cancel this, and / What is left are my mistakes. . . ." How would you recognize mistakes? What's a mistake and what isn't for you?
BW Well, canceling that would be the act of the poem. And that is an aggressive act:

> Aggressive neutrality.
> Haig,
> On the disposition of needs.
> Suppose I cancel this, and
> What is left are my mistakes. . . .

I had just brought up Alexander Haig and his aggressive neutrality, which is instrumental in *my* aggressive neutrality. Haig's aggressive neutrality is a power imbalance that says, "These are the facts, and all of you are the mistakes." The whole population is leftovers, subject to whatever is instrumental for Haig. My response to this is, "Suppose I cancel *this,* and what is left are *my* mistakes." I'm taking on the social unconscious—using the term provisionally—as the remorse for my having initiated such an act of aggressive neutrality. Whereas when Haig initiates an act of instrumental language, it's not to account for what he hasn't figured out yet about how to distribute America's surplus grain to the underfed in South America. The mistakes are going to take care of themselves. Obviously there's a scale difference between Haig's and my mistakes, but this is a ritual of purification in relation to the challenge of Haig.

GH So that line follows your reference to Haig needs to be there, isn't just randomly inserted? I mean, this isn't "first thought, best thought" is it?

BW No, not at all. It's a deliberate negotiation to come to the thought to put down on paper; it's not improvisatory.

GH Do you use any particular procedures in *Progress?* Steve Benson, Kit Robinson, Ron Silliman, for instance, use various predetermined plans for constructing a work. Did that enter into the writing of *Progress?*
BW It did, but that's pretty evident in terms of the stanza form. The poem was written sequentially, but it was rewritten quite a bit. It was negotiated at the point I was at in the poem at all points. Then things come into the poem from any number of sources. The motivation could be spontaneous or deliberate, but I think it's clear what the form is just by looking at it on the page. There is also a kind of substructure in terms of numbers, counting. There are two hundred pages in the original typescript, multiples of five and six and three in terms of stanzas and lines, and there are certain recurrences of thematic material—names of countries, political figures, numbers of numbers—that I would bring into the poem at specific intervals. Almost every ten pages you find the name of a political figure, and on every page you find two occurrences of the word *I*. The word is being used as a word.

GH Like "I walks," with a first-person subject and third-person verb?
BW The *I* becomes an "it." Or even "Walk I," someone's out walking the *I*.

GH That brings up questions about the subject and so on, psychologically speaking, or the post-structuralist question of the formation of the subject and the multiplicity of selves tied up in what we call the subject. Is that something that interests you?
BW It's inevitably the case that there is no unitary subject, and of course the subject changes in time. The act of writing changes the subject. But the specific reason for writing the word *I* as dissociated from me—it's not me—is that it allows one to investigate areas of language that you wouldn't be able to without it. It's not an indication of what Jameson would call dissociation, or of the self as fragmented—it's a constructive principle intended to engage the world on certain terms. In order to do that we need to use the word *I* provisionally. Anyone who has worked in a large institution constantly uses the word *I* as a word, saying things like, "I don't think I can give you that price," when what you mean is that *the company* can't give them that price. This use of the word *I* is ubiquitous, and anyone who takes language seriously doesn't have to posit a dissociation or a fragmentation of the subject to use it. I would reject seeing the subject at a default in relation to this use of the word *I*. What I'm trying to do is engage the possibilities of it constructively in this poem.

GH To get back to my earlier question about your generational procedures, some of the stanzas in *Progress* look as though they could be completely aleatory, yet in your discussion of the Haig stanza you make it clear that the material before and after that line plays a very specific role there. Whereas some other poets are much more willing to let things occur in conjunctions that to them don't really matter.

BW If you look at Jackson Mac Low, who is the most aleatorical writer I can think of, it turns out that his use of aleatory is involved in his reading of neo-Aristotelian philosophy from the 1940s, his rejection of the unconscious, his interest in Buddhism. So there's no such thing as pure chance. Chance is interested. That having been said, in fact there are some aspects of *Progress* that are pretty gratuitous, but they are placed in such a way that their aleatorical value is being argued for whatever it might convey. What I really want to know is, What is randomness telling us when we experience it? For one thing, randomness seems to be very unlikely—I don't experience it very often. In fact I experience too much closure and order; everything is exactly where it should be. So when the random event happens one tends to treasure it and to use it in some way. There are a number of random elements in this poem, but they are immediately a part of the argument.

GH So then once you see the result, you aren't going to revise it, because you like it. Even though getting to it was random, the result is something that works for you.

BW Say the connection between two things is really gratuitous: what interests me is what the combination might yield in terms of the ongoing argument. It's similar to saying that the twelve-tone system is expressive as opposed to purely formal. It has expressive possibilities. Aleatory has argumentative possibilities.

GH Would you explain what's going on in this passage?

> I reject a symbol for pig-iron
> Production along the Volga
> Visited by Lumumba on tour
> In a gondola of coal,
> fused. . . .
>
> In the heart of a blast furnace
> As a word,
> meanwhile voices
> Urge syntagma of sightseers
> Into barges for the trip down. . . .

Is that a comment on Socialist Realism? "I reject a symbol for pig-iron?
BW It's more complicated than that because it's acting out the *I: "I* reject a symbol for pig-iron / Production." Kit Robinson writes, "I demolished 530 Bush" [laughs]. Think of how many buildings are left, and at the same time think of the violence of that act. "I reject a *symbol* for pig-iron / Production"—that would be this little thing on a map. Here's the Volga and we see this miniature steel mill, and at that place 10,000 workers show up in overalls every morning at the factory gate, go in, and make pig iron. That would be representation in the static sense, right? I reject representation in that form. Rather, the poem is being fused in the heart of a blast furnace, as it were. That's where *pig iron* comes from, having been fused in a blast furnace rather than having been imposed on pig-iron production by a map. So there are two forms of representation: one categorized from above and one coming out of the experience of producing pig iron. And out of that there are a series of puns, actually, on what meaning is. Here you have the colonialized revolutionary on tour seeing the accomplishments of the socialist state, a representative of the third world visiting a representation of the second world. And I'm rejecting these for the formation at the heart of the blast furnace. "Meanwhile voices / Urge syntagma of sightseers / into barges for the trip down": tourists, consumers of false representations, are being floated down river toward their sort of cloacal destination. At the same time a syntagmatic organization *is* occurring by virtue of such automatized spectacles that float down stream. This is a kind of comment on the form of the poem, on the relation of the poem to language. Then I "jump from a 13-story hotel / And assume a net" to counter this syntax. In other words, I'm accepting not representation but a fusing of representation and experience, and the poem is a way that that occurs.

GH Is there anything else you would like to say about the book?
BW That it does argue and is not a static work. That is, it develops, and about four-fifths of the way through the poem I think a crisis is reached and some resolution occurs. And that shape was not anticipated at all.

GH How would you distinguish your own practice from Clark Coolidge's or someone else's?
BW In Coolidge there is an extension in time, a responsiveness in writing not exactly like "first thought, best thought" but certainly an improvisatory responsiveness he's arguing. Then he gets interested in what he calls the "thin spots," where the psyche is washed out, and he wants to keep writing through these to show how the place where you don't think you have anything else to say can produce more psychic energy. Coolidge is interested in an endlessly generative bout of the art impulse. A whole thesis exists on the way art appears in Coolidge's work, how he works off the

notion of art and uses it to recharge the psyche. Finally it comes down to the social role Coolidge wants to play, which is that of the continually productive and deliberately isolated writer whose concern is first of all with the material at hand.

I end up stressing the social role of the artist because I think questions of writing as method lead there. In terms of language, I've placed myself within social processes that are more conflicted then the kinds of unmediated access to language Coolidge pursues. The immediacy I'm interested in is not identified so clearly with the real time of writing. I want to use language that's already in circulation to see if it can be reinvented, and to make constructive use of the space between the work and other's responses to it. The medium is no longer simply in the writer or on the page, but in a kind of intersubjective resonance that is as much a part of the act as the act of writing itself.

ON WHETHER OR NOT TO BELIEVE IN YOUR MIND BY NORMAN FISCHER (The Figures, 1987)

Digging through old journals I spotted this, jotted down in Charles Olson's class by Clark Coolidge:

> Peter Auxier: language is something you have to get into rather than something that's in you, to be got out

Now Norman Fischer:

> Experience may not be *wholly* linguistic
> Though I suspect it is.

Both of which support the conviction that language and its parallel domain Imagination, are *out there* places, not sealed mental locations to pry open privately via drugs or any other technique. The poem accordingly is also not private affair dredged from *inside,* but gets composed of public, and widely available, linguistic elements.

The fact is, solitary mental phenomena seem pretty lonely & impoverished when viewed against our common & inhabited world.

Walk out on the planet. Keep your eyes open as you move. You'll notice there isn't a thing you can find inside your own personal consciousness as crazy, wise, sexy or awesome as what you encounter outside you. This is the true principality of Mind. No one ever, for instance, located in their own brain any so mindblowing a thing as men with shovels found when they dug the first dinosaur bone out of some pit. Yet—and this would be Fischer's take—you don't need to trek out in search of wild or outlandish discoveries. Imagination and language are here among us.

"The regular most extraordinary."

Still, Fischer's supplied us with two fanciful tales—one a headfast galumphing postmodernist witch story, like he'd tell kids, with weird characters melting into one another. The other a pre-Kipling gentleman-adventurer's tale of British Raj India days, complete with tigers, gemstone encrusted boxes, and a whimsically by turns generous and cruel Maharaja. At the moment of the India story's denouement, right when you learn the awful & mistaken truth about the fate of the narrator's favorite wife, *somebody* in *italics* interrupts, complaining of a headache and lost glasses.

The joke though is that this ain't *metacriticism,* like they supposedly enjoy on the streets of present-day Paris or New Haven—it's storytelling in gritty bodily context, like the streets of Cairo or Rajputana—except instead of out loud it's written on paper. When the storyteller finishes he rubs his eyes wearily, and the spell's broken. There you sit, holding Fischer's book, gently & unalarmingly unsure of what to believe.

Perhaps storytelling's vanishing somewhat from Mind among us—into the reduced precincts of tv & movies—but it remains as much as our tongues part of our make-up. People who sneer at myth and fable may as well sneer at their own left hands. Nonetheless, most current linguistic attention—and Fischer documents *this* stuff much more extensively—prosaically heads towards everyday chatter, nervous thought, planmaking, discussing the news, and doing things with other people. All of which presupposes a commonalty of language. So friends, kids, dogs, neighbors, toys, buildings, & trees appear in these poems, which being contemporary to it all read in a justifiably fragmented manner—life obviously splinters into a hundred stories each pursuing its own destiny. None of the poems, however, succumb to deliberate avant-guardish derangement. Fischer's engagement as longtime Zen practitioner, community leader, and familyman seems to run counter to privately imposed methodological word-warping. A father and a neighborhood "incharge" have to trust, if not believe, in the pos-

sibility that words reflect things actually getting talked about, and are referentially effective in getting things done.

The poems inhabit language easily & humorously—built on pragmatisms & contradictions. A community of people, such as Green Gulch Zen Ctr., of which Fischer is the director, uses words magically & reliably to construct dwelling places, grow food, work out finances, and express ire or affection. This maybe explains the book's disarming "let's get things done" tone. It anyhow shows a friendly—rather than the now fashionable *ironic*—interest in letting all sorts of jumbling voices have their say.

How to Plan a Garden

What we want to do and what other people want to see.

A gateway.

The aesthetic ellipse.

It's very important to have some manageability to what you're doing.

Potentially scheduled.

The base of the hill

Lemonberry

Persimmons are pretty in the Fall when leafless they with fruit are hung, as though all the world were in a permanent state of Fall, expectant of a rosy Winter.

All around it a flowering hedge.

Lavender and cistus.

A friendship rock wall.

The South side in cover.

Kids plant trees.

Another page hugely announces,

> THE HUMAN PERSON HAS BROKEN FREE
> FROM THE GREAT SILENCE OF MATTER

and that's plenty. In anyone's book.

—ANDREW SCHELLING

"THE SOUL IS AN ONSLAUGHT"

> The vector of space is resurrection. We walk on the earth under which they lie who also matter to us.

In another age, when Johnson had his Boswell or Goethe his Eckermann, the sagacity of voluble men was eagerly jotted into notebooks by compatriots who acted on the impulse of their own insight into the prophetic mentality. In that indeterminate temporal leviathan known as modernity this venerable practice has nearly disappeared—in fact, it's hard enough for the seriously talkative to get a hearing at all, let alone a worthy interlocutor. So the old speech-to-print practice has had to be reworked from another angle, most compellingly in the case of Charles Olson.

Olson handled his own literary apparitions well enough. Aside from *The Maximus Poems* he put together two exceptional collections of poems, *In Cold Hell, In Thicket* and—reworking this configuration—*The Distances* in 1960, one of those classically proportioned, seemingly invincible statements that very few books of poetry manage to achieve (others would include Duncan's *Opening of the Field,* Stevens' *Transport to Summer,* Oppen's *Of Being Numerous,* Ashbery's *The Double Dream of Spring*—to cite a few from the decades of Olson's activity). As indelible an impression as *The Distances* leaves, it hardly begins to "represent" the scope of the man's work. It turns out that he was as prolific in poetry as he was in the epistolary mode. *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson* (University of California Press), just published as this issue of *Sulfur* goes to press, fractures all prior sense of Olson's scale. At 643 pages, it presents a body of non- or extra-Maximus poetry four times as large as what Olson published in his lifetime.

What is most immediately striking is just how singularly the vision of Olson's work is handled by, and provided in the care afforded by, George Butterick. "None of the poems are without risk," Butterick writes (xxi), and

this is equally true of his exemplary editorial insight into the parameters of Olson's work. This *Collected Poems* is a subtle argument from within the conventional organizing principles of such volumes; since most of the poems were not published during Olson's life, it is Butterick's discretionary reading which literally shapes the body of the man's work. In certain cases "it has been impossible or even undesirable to judge which version of a poem is the preferred or superior version." (xxii-xxiii) So Butterick decisively offers the work as a *cortical array*. Different drafts of certain poems are printed side by side; poems appear which are blunt and engaging challenges to any vested concept of poetry; the marginal, the incidental, and the casual are given a status unheralded in the idiom of the collected poems. While there's some precedent for this in *The Maximus Poems*, the conservation of this radical vision in the extra-Maximus material is wholly Butterick's.

What this collection of Olson's work provides is more than a supplementary volume of distinct and kerygmatic prophecies, standing firmly aside from the Maximus volumes as *The Distances* did. Butterick's bold corporealizing of this work as the final horizon of Maximus is more than a deed—it's an enstasy in which Butterick has enacted "the chain of memory as resurrection," that

> . . .we must woo the thing
> to get its feet together so that its shoulder blades
> are open, so that the aorta (375)

In the same mail that brought Olson was *Giants Play Well In the Drizzle* (October 1987), with this short poem by George Butterick that embeds itself in the imagination as indelibly as anything in the collected Olson:

> Delicacies, endless
> deliciousness, the way the moon
> ladles forth light and exhaustion
> lies on the waters to support it.

—JED RASULA

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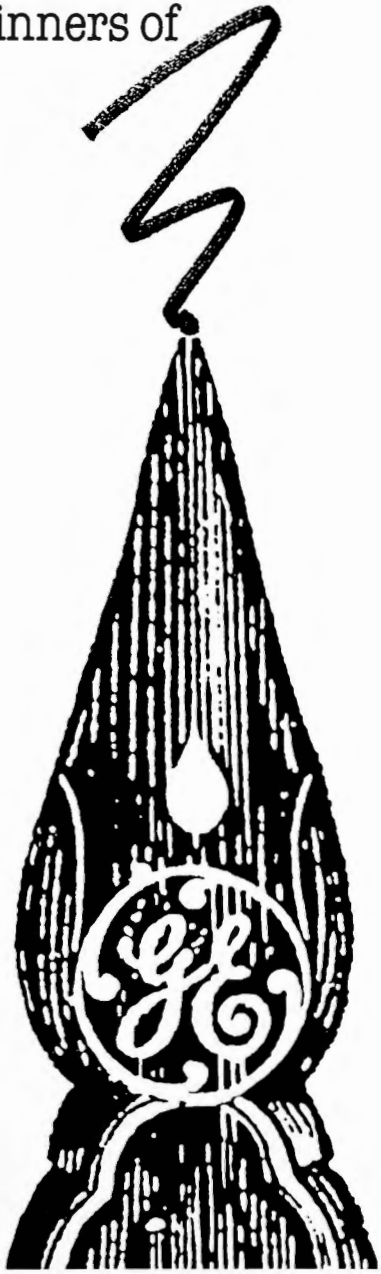

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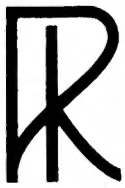

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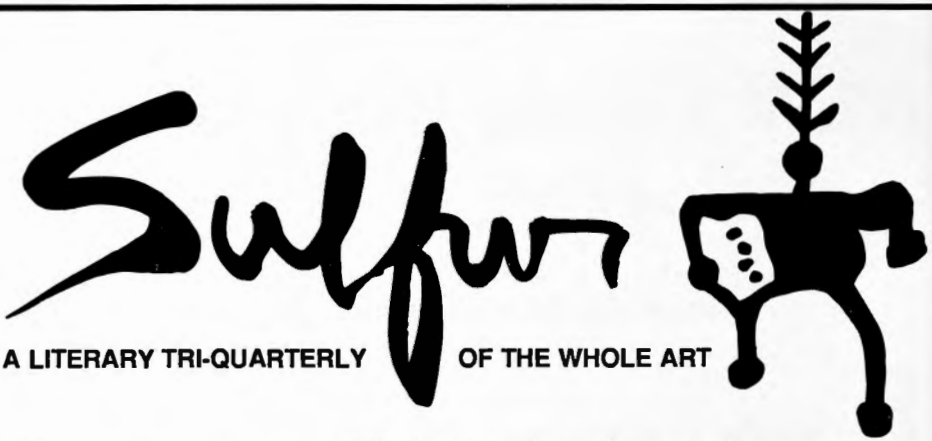

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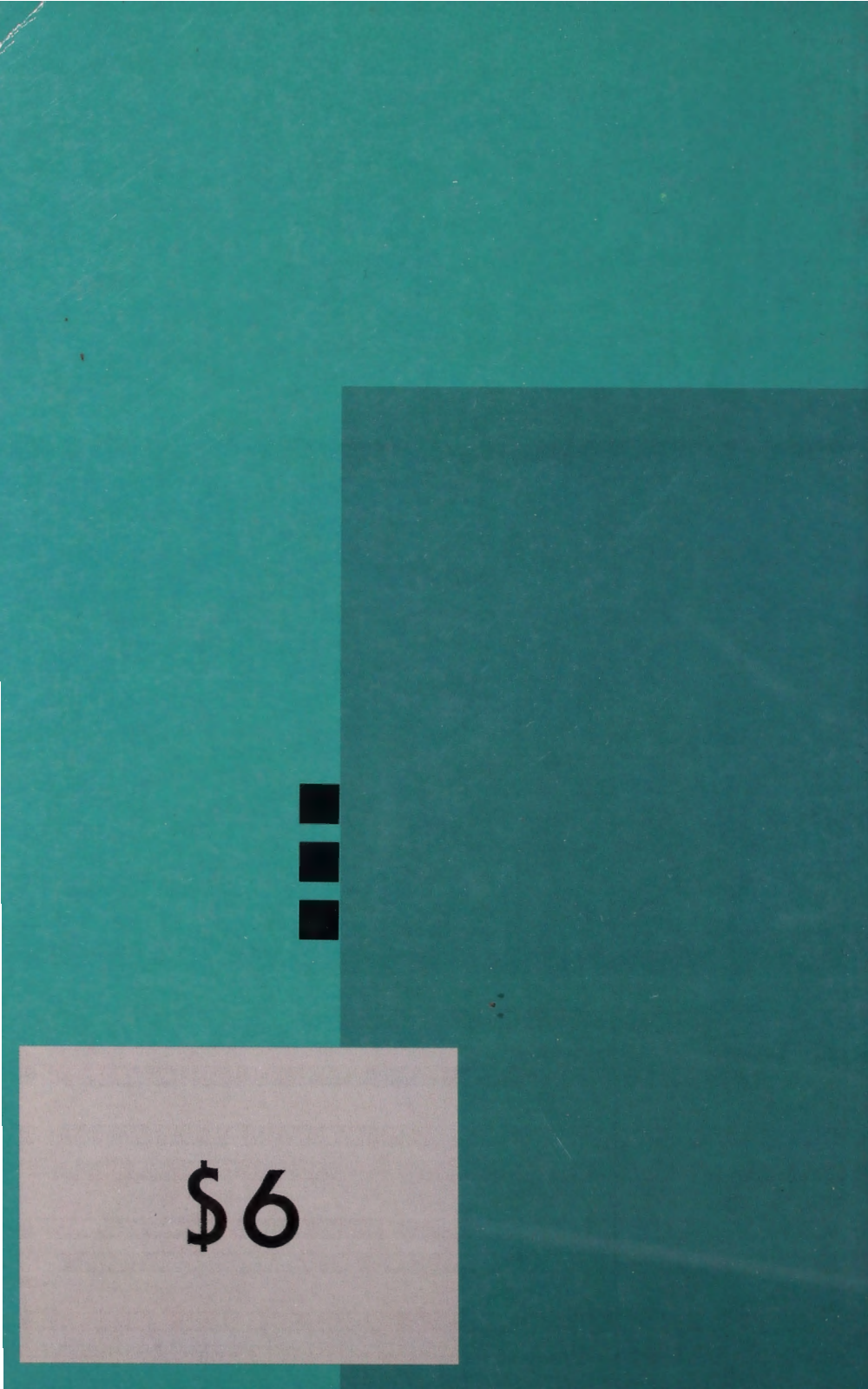
$6